

Inside England's Tap Jams: Improvisation, Identity, and Community

Sally Crawford
De Montfort University, Leicester

September 2014

This thesis is submitted for the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

This thesis examines tap dance practice and performance in England. The study is based on a multi-sited ethnography of two tap dance communities in Manchester and London. Participants in the communities ranged in ages from eighteen to eighty and were from a variety of social backgrounds. The investigation focusses on the tap jam, an informal performance event that showcases improvised tap dance to live music. Many individuals disclosed that they joined the tap communities despite possessing limited knowledge and experience of tap improvisation.

Improvisation in tap dance is traditionally studied within the context of performance technique and the historical evolution of tap practice in the United States. American tap practitioners and historians such as Hill (2010), Knowles (2002), Frank (1994), and Stearns and Stearns (1968) state that tap improvisation contributes to unique performance styles but do not clarify how these identities are achieved by tap dancers.

In order to understand how performance styles are generated, a symbolic interactionist approach is applied to the act of tap improvisation in the two communities. Viewing tap improvisation through a symbolic interactionist framework revealed that the tap jams are a shared social process that does not limit participation based on dance training or socio-cultural background. The improvised performances at the tap jam created performance identities that focussed on the individual rather than on an English interpretation of tap dance. The thesis delivers an analysis and discussion of how the tap community members cultivate these identities within a social context, exploring how tap dance is evolving beyond American identity and practice.

Acknowledgements

The foundation of this thesis is formed by the passion, curiosity, and boundless creativity of the many participants from the Manchester and London tap communities. To the tap jam organisers: Jess Murray, Junior Laniyan, Melody Lander, and Dan Sheridan many thanks for your patience and enthusiasm in answering countless questions. In the Manchester community I want to acknowledge a core of individuals that shared my first steps of my fieldwork: Heather, Sally, Aiden, Kevin, Justine, and Karen your insights and support were invaluable. My thanks to the London community members, especially Michele, Miriam, Lee, Simeon, Vicki, and Annette who never failed to answer emails, texts, or share photos.

Musicians played an integral part in contributing observations and I must acknowledge the Michele Drees Trio and Michael Creitu Trio for providing wonderful inspiration onstage and insight off the stage. Many additional vocalists and instrumentalists also contributed to the atmosphere of the tap jams and as a tap dancer I thank you.

Tap practitioners Heather Cornell, Lisa LaTouche, Roxanne Butterfly, Constance Valis Hill, Susan Hebach, Margaret Morrison, and Billie Mahoney are not considered regular members of the tap communities in Manchester and London. They are part of the global tap community and for their insights, support, and inspiration I am very grateful. To the late Will Gaines, it was an honour and privilege to learn your personal tap story and hear your joyful rhythms on stage.

To the creators and crew of PhD Comics I want to thank you for including my thesis as part of your PhDetours programming and introducing tap dance to your academic communities. I was proud to share the stage with Jorge and Crystal in their first ever tap improvisations.

Despite extremely difficult financial conditions, the funding from the DMU Dance Department and School of Arts contributed to the completion of my fieldwork. I also want to thank Emma Manning for answering countless emails and phone calls in her assistance to secure the loans that supported my studies.

There are too many colleagues and friends on both sides of the Atlantic that shared in my triumphs and struggles during my thesis. To the staff at HCA, LC, UWI, friends and performers from home, thank you all for your supportive ears and creative minds.

I want to extend a very warm thank you to my supervisors at De Montfort University. To Professors Ramsay Burt and Simon Featherstone for their excellent guidance and to all the members of the Dance Department for their feedback. I extend my most sincere thanks to Professor Theresa Buckland. Without her seemingly endless patience, extensive expertise and support this thesis would not be possible.

Ms Dorothy Thomas taught me my first shuffle ball change, Mrs Donna Frogge offered me riffs and chugs to keep me going, Ms Ryan-Strati tapped beside me on so many nights, and Mr Sefton reminded me to shine. However, I can honestly say this research

would not have been possible without the love of rhythm that Angie Allendorf Price instilled in me. Thank you to all my mentors in rhythm.

To my family, dear friends, and the Shepherd family: thank you for always answering the phone and your endless encouragement. Mom and Dad, thank you for that first pair of tap shoes that started me on this journey and for listening to every single shuffle step on the way. And finally, to Neil for his never-ending patience, support, and love.

Table of Contents	
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Illustrations	viii
Chapter 1 Initial Explorations	1
Chapter 2 Historical Perspectives: The Tap Jam in the United States and its Implementation in England	12
<i>American Origins</i>	14
<i>English Implementation</i>	28
<i>The Role of Music in American and English Tap Jams</i>	40
<i>American and English Tap Jams: a Comparative Perspective</i>	45
<i>Summary</i>	51
Chapter 3: Ethnographic Methodologies	57
<i>Designing the Ethnographic Study</i>	57
<i>Participant observation</i>	70
<i>Multi-sited Ethnography</i>	78
<i>Netnography</i>	81
<i>Individual Case Studies</i>	92
<i>Analysis of Fieldnotes and Data</i>	98
<i>Summary</i>	103
Chapter 4: Inside the Tap Communities and Tap Jams	107
<i>The Tap Communities as Affinity Groups</i>	107
<i>The Manchester Tap Community</i>	114
<i>The London Tap Community</i>	121
<i>Introducing the Tap Jam to England</i>	131
<i>Tap Jam Venues</i>	133
<i>Renegade Stage</i>	138
<i>On the Stage and in the Moment</i>	143
<i>Mercy, Mercy, Mercy and the Shim Sham</i>	151
<i>Summary</i>	152
Chapter 5 Tap Improvisation: Approaches and Processes	156
<i>Tap Improvisation</i>	156
<i>Tap Classes: Changing Focus</i>	160
<i>The Hoofers Lounge</i>	165
<i>Tap Dance Online: Social Networking Sites and Improvisation</i>	170
<i>Summary</i>	176

Chapter 6: Improvisation, Interaction, and Identity	179
<i>Parameters of Analysis</i>	<i>181</i>
<i>Interactions and Identity</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>Tap dancer and Audience</i>	<i>201</i>
<i>Tap dancer and Musicians</i>	203 204
<i>Tap dancer and Community Member</i>	207 208
<i>Global Interactions and Individual Identities</i>	209 210
<i>Summary</i>	215 216
Chapter 7 Future Improvisations	219 220
Appendix A: DVD Examples	226 227
Appendix B: Participant Interviews	227 228
Appendix C: Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing Sources	228 229
Bibliography	229 230
Filmography	243 244
Websites Accessed	243 244

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Creation of ‘Free Nodes’ or coding categories using Nvivo8	101
Figure 2: Example of creating tables to visualise frequency of codes within Nvivo8	102
Figure 3: Members of the Manchester tap community performing at the June 2010 jam.	115
Figure 4: Manchester tap community tap technique classes.	117
Figure 5: Manchester community members participating in a Renegade Stage workshop during the December 2009 Tap Jam.	118
Figure 6: Community members performing at the London Tap Jam October 2009.	122
Figure 7: Lander and Laniyan discuss the set list at the November 2009 Tap Jam.	123
Figure 8: Community member speaks to Lisa La Touche at a master class at Pineapple Dance Studios in October 2010.	125
Figure 9: Ronnie Scott’s Upstairs Bar set up for the September 2009 Tap Jam.	135
Figure 10: The audience gathered around small tables at Band on the Wall for the June 2009 Tap Jam in Manchester.	136
Figure 11: Community members participate in the Renegade Stage at the October Tap Jam in London.	140
Figure 12: Programme with song list from Manchester Tap Jam May 2011	144
Figure 13: Participants comping during the Manchester Tap Jam April 2013.	147
Figure 14: Group improvisation with using simple rhythms at Manchester Tap Jam April 2012.	190
Figure 15: Sarah makes eye contact with the musicians instead of staring at the stage as she did in early tap jam performances.	192
Figure 16: Annette performs a duet of trading eights with the pianist at the November 2009 Tap Jam in London.	194 195
Figure 17: Karen performs a duet with her mother at the March 2010 Tap Jam in Manchester.	209 210

Chapter 1 Initial Explorations

One of my earliest and most memorable tap experiences in England was taking a group of undergraduate university students in Liverpool for a tap dance workshop in 2008.¹ I led six second year dance students, all female, through a series of warm-up exercises and a few combinations of steps that focussed on rhythmic clarity and timing. Despite the February chill outside, the condensation on the studio windows and the sweaty brows of the students indicated how hard they worked. The smiles and occasional giggle led me to believe they were enjoying the challenging combinations. After a few travelling sequences and learning a short routine, I gathered the students in a circle. I announced that we would finish with some improvisation. After one hour and twenty minutes of enthusiastic tapping, this statement was met with absolute silence and stillness. No one moved. Assuming there was a misunderstanding, I repeated the phrase and demonstrated a step with some fast heel drops and a shuffle step. ‘Who wants to start?’ I asked, and this question set off a chain reaction: one student sat down and refused to participate, another started shaking her head back and forth repeatedly, murmuring ‘no, no, no, please, no’, another girl was furiously blinking back tears, and one student rather loudly announced that she was leaving if she had to improvise. The behaviour of the students left me bewildered. How had my announcement induced such an adverse reaction to tap dance and improvisation? The remaining two students stared at me blankly and one bravely asked, ‘how do you improvise tap dance?’

How does one learn to improvise tap dance? As a tap practitioner I tried to draw upon my previous training in tap dance as a response to this question. My training in a dance studio reflected a similar experience of many American tap students: learning taught combinations and preparing routines for public presentation in an annual recital. I was fortunate that my teacher also emphasised improvisation in her choreography of the routines. While structured syllabi such as Al Gilbert's Graded Tap Syllabus existed, my teacher did not follow any tap examination content.² I learned tap routines that were a collection of reinterpreted steps learned from her mentors and class material. As students we were encouraged to contribute to the routines and often improvised as a class to find inspiration for new steps. Improvisation has always been a part of my tap practice, from my earliest memories of exploring how fast I could tap in the brightly painted basement of the local dance studio, to attending tap jams in Kansas City, and in my professional performances with jazz trios. Initially, I found myself at a loss to answer that student's question; I could not recall precisely when or how I had learned to improvise tap dance. I just *did*.

The reactions of the students and my inability to answer their question stayed with me as I started my early investigations for the thesis. Throughout my fieldwork I encountered individuals expressing a similar unfamiliarity with improvisation and tap dance. By documenting and analysing the experiences of the participants I believed I could formulate an answer to that student's question. What I discovered is that improvisation in tap dance is a process of physical and musical interactions that produced constantly evolving relationships between community members, musicians,

and audience members. Within these relationships, each participant explored rhythmic patterns as well as cultivated personal connections that were not confined to the stage. I wanted to capture how a participant learned to improvise tap dance and the impact that experience had on her or his individual development beyond the dance studio.

Manchester and London have active, self-named tap communities that promote tap jams. Tap jams are informal performance events that feature improvised tap dance and live music. Throughout my fieldwork I documented and examined the experience of tap dance community members in Manchester and London as they attended tap jams and other community-sponsored activities. I wanted to understand how the communities supported the participants in their development as tap dancers. Exploring the tap jams as both a performance opportunity and social event revealed how individuals derived meaning from the improvisations that shaped their identity as a performer. Within this study I approach the study of tap improvisation as social process within a non-theatrical context outside of United States.

I selected ethnography as my methodology specifically for the participant observation techniques, self-reflexive and embodied approaches. The observations and interviews from the fieldsites were supported by my performances at tap jams. Tap dance celebrates individuality and understand how each performer cultivates a unique interpretation of rhythm required me to re-engage with my own tap practice. My ethnographic investigation was conducted in two jazz clubs in Manchester and London but grew into a multi-sited study as I participated in activities outside of the tap jams from January 2009 to June 2011. Community-sponsored tap technique classes,

workshops, master classes, and screenings of tap films were included in my documentation of the community members' experience.

The fieldsites concentrated on Manchester and London as these were the only cities actively promoting regular tap jams. Companies such as Tap Attack offered workshops, performances, and intensive programmes that incorporated tap improvisation but focus on choreographed performances.³ Two individuals worked as professional tap dancers and performed at tap jams occasionally but were based in Brighton. Extended interviews and case studies were difficult to conduct due to the lack of availability of these performers and my ability to travel regularly to Brighton. By eliminating these organisations and performers from my study I did not fully investigate how tap dance was incorporated into professional performances outside of the fieldsites. This potentially narrowed my scope of contemporary tap performance in England. Instead, the focus of my study was the improvisational and social practices of the tap jams as I wanted to consider how amateurs engaged with and developed their own tap practice. Applying ethnography as my methodology created opportunities for me to analyse and experience tap dance alongside the individuals developing and promoting the tap jams in England.

Professional dance societies such as the UK-based Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing and the International Dance Teachers Association introduced tap improvisation into their syllabi but do not include improvisations in the final exams (ISTD 2009, IDTA 2009). Participants in both fieldsites revealed their previous tap training included following the syllabus classes and taking exams. Due to funding and time constraints I

was unable to immerse myself fully in an extensive tap course and examination with the ISTD. I participated in a short course of tap classes at Birmingham DanceXchange that featured tap steps from a syllabus glossary. These classes were supplemented with an archival visit to the ISTD headquarters in London. The full tap syllabus experience was not captured in my fieldwork and I had to rely heavily on interviews and case study data to address gaps in my understanding.

The tap syllabus classes and participant interviews exposed a surprising lack of focus on tap dance history in the curricula. Throughout its wax and wane of popularity in the United States, tap dance shared a distinct link to its own history. The acting of passing steps down between performers enables tap dancers to become a vehicle for embodied cultural knowledge of the dance form.⁴ In order to determine how the embodied knowledge of tap dance manifested through the process of improvisation I utilised a historical framework to support my ethnographic investigation. Including the history of improvisation in the tap jams created the opportunity to explore identity, as dance scholar Theresa Buckland writes:

the process affords opportunity to explore embodied cultural knowledge as temporally and spatially dynamic, situational in its meaning, and creative in the interstices of personal and communal histories that reach across experiences of researcher and researched. Such departures of inquiry are often inextricably, though not exclusively, linked with issues of identity. (2006: 14)

A comparative analysis of the history of tap jam implementation in the United States and England allowed me to identify differences in how tap improvisation is practised and valued in each country. Understanding these differences revealed how individuals

interpret and create an identity through the process of improvisation and the impact of the separate environments.

Examining the evolution of the tap jams in each country revealed that improvisation in tap dance is contextualised within academic literature that focusses on tap history and performance. Authors such as Constance Valis Hill (2010: 3) describe how early tap challenges materialised as a 'competition, contest, breakdown, or showdown in which tap dancers compete against each other before an audience of spectators or judges'. The works of Hill (2010), Mark Knowles (2002), Marshall and Jean Stearns (1968), and Jerry Ames and Jim Siegleman (1977) are among limited publications on the early history and evolution of tap dance. Hill (2000) and Jim Haskins and N. R. Mitgang (1988) produced biographies on past performers, but provide little discussion of current performers and improvisational practices. Hill's (2010) text is the only source that delves into tap dance within an American cultural history, considering issues such as gender, ethnicity, and social backgrounds of practitioners. Rusty E. Frank (1990) presents biographies of primarily American practitioners from 1900-1950 and includes additional tap resources, such as films and books. Tap dancer Anita Feldman (1996) also provides information on performance materials such as tap floors and shoes.

Discussion of improvisational tap practice is limited and focuses on personal interpretations and potential choreographic practices. Tap practitioners Brenda Bufalino (2004), Acia Gray (1998), Feldman (1996), and Jerry Ormonde (1931) all produced guides on tap dance for both experienced and new students. Gray (1998: 20) offers, 'one interpretation of rhythms and structures that have been handed down to me

by numerous individuals' in her book. Feldman (1996: v) includes 'an extensive chapter on structured improvisation and choreography' in her guide. Neither author delves into significant theoretical detail on the process of improvisation and its role in the dance form. Bufalino (2004: 11) provides exercises for improving improvisation skills, but offers little academic theory as to how she developed her approach beyond experimentation. She includes her own philosophy of tap dance performance as a 'multitude of rhythms blend gently, fiercely, sometimes in combat, sometimes in a soft embrace, sometimes lustfully conceiving a new planet of sound and movement'. Similarly, Gray (1998: 20) describes her views on tap dance as 'a mode of transportation in the search for self-expression' and Feldman (1996: IV) writes that her 'concepts, ideas, and combinations' may help the tap dancer to improve his or her ability.

The histories, biographies and personal philosophies of practitioners reveal little of the improvisational processes that contribute to the development of the individuality in every performer. Unique presentations of tap performance are frequently noted by historians such as Hill (2000, 2010), Frank (1990), Knowles (2002), and Stearns and Stearns (1968) but how that individuality is achieved through improvisation is not explained or analysed. Early tap jams in New York City are described by Hill (2010) and Stearns and Stearns (1968) as sites for exchanging improvised tap practice without an audience present.⁵ The authors acknowledge that the tap jams occurred in social spaces for performers but do not discuss in extensive detail how the non-performance interactions impacted on the performances of the practitioners.

I wanted to understand how participants negotiated their own individual interpretation of tap improvisation within a social collective. Initial observations from my fieldwork revealed an emphasis on the individual and a lack of intention to establish a clear association with a specific ethnic or gender group. Tap improvisation was not, as dance anthropologist Jane Desmond (1997: 31) states, acting ‘as a marker for the production of gender, racial, ethnic, class, and national identities’. The participants in the tap communities did not reflect this approach of using dance to explore a national or cultural identity despite performing in a designated community. Dance researchers such as Ramsay Burt (1998) and Andree Grau (2008) discuss how individual dance practitioners in the early twentieth century created identities that went beyond ‘rigid’ (Burt 1998: 166) conceptions of race and gender but the communities are not seeking to challenge these issues in the same manner with tap performance.

To understand why signifiers of gender, age, and ethnicity were absent in improvised performances, I applied a symbolic interactionist approach to my observations of the tap jams. Symbolic interactionist theory draws upon the work of sociologists such as George Mead (1934) with his concept of identity as reflexive process and Herbert Blumer’s (1986) three premises of how humans derive meaning from social interactions. Mead (1943) analysed gestures between individuals to distinguish between ‘I’ and ‘Me’ aspects of the personality. Blumer (1986: 9) drew on Mead’s work but regarded interaction as ‘a presentation of gestures and a response to the meaning of those gestures’, citing examples such as posture, eye contact, and non-verbal cues. Blumer states that

[t]he first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them...The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters'. (1986: 2)

Both Mead and Blumer argued that the non-verbal interactions influence an individual's understanding of their identity within a social environment. The concept of studying an individual's posture, gesture, and eye contact as a response to another person's movements presented a solution for analysing the performances at tap jams. Symbolic interactionism considers how 'social interaction helps us to understand identity as an emergent property of reflexive social praxis' (Gibson 2010: 13) and this reflected the intention of the tap jams as an environment that promoted individual performance styles as part of a community activity.

Symbolic interactionism allowed me to consider the key element in tap improvisation: interaction between performers. Existing research on identity construction among jazz musicians which uses a symbolic interactionist framework proved an effective model. Christopher Schneider describes his application of a symbolic interactionist in his research on identity development in jazz communities where he

examines music as both an individual and social practice – particularly in the ways musicians' identities are created and maintained through select aspects of musical performance...identity construction as both a technology of self and as a collective social process, contributing to significance of social context as an important feature of identity construction within jazz improvisation. (2010:9)

Music studies utilise a symbolic interactionist perspective to examine how identity is formed by musicians as seen in the work of Tia DeNora's (2000) *technology of the self* and Nick Dempsey's (2008) study on jazz communities. Norman Denzin's (2010, 2013) collections apply a symbolic interactionist approach to multiple music genres, revealing how musicians construct identities in the social processes of ensemble performance. Within a symbolic interactionist framework I explored how improvisation and interactions within the tap jams create individual identities that focus on self-discovery. Understanding how tap dance is evolving beyond an association as an American dance form further contributes to academic literature on globalisation and dance studies.⁶

The thesis outlines the evolution of tap improvisation practice in the United States and England. *Chapter Two Historical Perspectives: The Tap Jam in the United States and its Implementation in England* examines how the tap jam originated in each country. Utilising a historical framework, I create a foundation for comparison of the differences in English tap jams with American tap practice. In *Chapter Three Ethnographic Methodologies*, I outline the techniques used in my fieldwork and data analysis. I discuss multi-sited ethnography and the benefits of considering netnography in my study. Methodological issues that arose throughout my investigation are also addressed within this chapter. An analysis of the tap communities' organisational structures is presented in *Chapter Four Inside the Tap Communities and Tap Jams*. This chapter also provides a detailed description of the tap jams, observing how each community programmes the event to benefit the participants. A formal discussion of tap improvisation is the focus of *Chapter Five Tap Improvisation: Approaches and*

Processes. I examine how engaging in tap improvisation in social spaces impacts on the interactions between participants in activities such as technique classes and social networking websites. *Chapter Six Improvisation, Interactions, and Identity* explores my application of symbolic interactionist theory to the improvised interactions of participants in the tap jams. The identities formed by participants are also examined within globalisation theory, in particular the process of glocalisation and its impact on tap practice in England. I offer concluding remarks and future approaches to tap dance research in *Chapter Seven: Future Improvisations*.

Notes:

¹ Tap dance developed from African and European dance traditions, primarily Irish and West African dances such as jig and juba (Hill 2010: 3). I discuss the evolution of the dance form in greater detail in Chapter Two.

²The company Music Works Unlimited (<http://www.musicworksunlimited.com/about>, 2013, accessed 04 August 2014) describes how Al Gilbert developed one of the earliest vocal tap instructional records to accompany a graded tap dance syllabus in the late 1950s. He named the record 'Graded Tap Technique 1' and developed eight grades of instructional content and examinations for tap teachers.

³The faculty of Tap Attack deliver 'specialist' training for youth and youth tap companies and offer 'bespoke performances to enhance and compliment any showcase, festival or corporate event' (<http://www.tapattack.co.uk/>, accessed 01 August 2014).

⁴ I analyse this process of sharing steps between tap dancers in Chapter Two.

⁵ I discuss the tap jams at locations such as the Hoofers Club and the backstage areas of theatres in detail in Chapter Two.

⁶Authors such as Shapiro (2008) and Osumare (2007) write extensively on globalisation in dance practice. I refer to their works in Chapter Six.

Chapter 2 Historical Perspectives: The Tap Jam in the United States and its Implementation in England

Tap dancers are exposed to the history of the dance form through anecdotal excerpts as they learn steps from other practitioners. Personal stories of past tap practitioners accompany instruction and sharing of tap vocabulary and formed early tap pedagogy in the United States. The historical context of the steps are framed within performance situations such as learning to create a new routine while touring with a show or performing with a large band.¹ Tap dance focuses on individual expression and ability, passing from performer to performer as tap dance historian Hill explains:

[u]nlike ballet with its codification of formal technique, tap dance developed from people listening to and watching each other dance in the street, dance hall, or social club, where steps were shared, stolen, and reinvented. “Technique” is transmitted visually, aurally, and corporeally, in a rhythmic exchange between dancers and musicians...The dynamic and synergistic process of copying the other to invent something new is most important to tap’s development. (2010: 3)

Hill highlights the act of ‘exchange’ between tap dancers and musicians as the primary method for transmitting elements of the technique and its progress as a dance form. As Hill maintains, tap dance did not develop within a structured framework or discipline of formal dance study. She suggests that the dance form developed across groups of African, Irish, and English immigrants in the format of a tap challenge (Hill 2010: 3). A tap challenge consists of two individuals competing to demonstrate proficiency in rhythmic interpretation of the music, using percussive footwork. The challenges feature improvisation with each tap dancer selecting steps from the individual repertoire which

he or she created. The tap challenges developed during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries into informal performance events. During the early 1970s, the 'Hoofers Challenges' began to explore the format of presenting the challenges before an audience (Hill 2010: 218-219). The first tap jams, however, did not appear in England until the early twenty-first century.

The tap jam developed in very different cultural, social, and economic contexts in the United States and in England. In this chapter I examine the separate conditions in which the tap jams evolved in order to compare current tap practice within English tap jams.² I also introduce differences in the social contexts during the evolution of jams in each country and early tap pedagogy of the twentieth century. I utilise a chronological approach to study the historical development of the tap jam in both countries. The history of the jams is framed within the mid-nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in the United States and through the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries in England. The large time span of over 150 years is due to the lack of a clearly identified origin of the tap jam. My investigation considers possible sources and inspirations for the tap jams from the early performance practices of Irish and English immigrants and African-American slaves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I also examine the improvised performances and backstage interactions of early vaudeville, Broadway, and night club tap dancers as the potential initiation for the tap jams in the United States during the early to mid-twentieth century.³ My secondary sources comprise performer biographies, prescriptive texts, and the history of the dance form from primarily an American perspective. I also engaged in archive research at the Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing in London to understand how tap dance was introduced into

England. The data at the archive included secondary sources of journal articles, biographies and ISTD syllabi that created a foundation for comparison of early tap practice and pedagogy in each country.

American Origins

African circle dances, Irish jigs, and Lancashire clogging dances all contributed to the advancement of the dance form in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States. Many tap dance historians such as Hill (2010), Knowles (2002), and Stearns and Stearns (1968) speculate that the roots of the tap jam can be traced back to the social dance gatherings and ring shouts that took place on plantations in the United States after the Civil War (1861-1865).⁴ The social dance events featured cakewalks and ‘buck and wing’ dances. The term ‘buck’ refers to any male solo dance and the term ‘wing’ originates from these solo dances in which the performers mimicked pigeons or chickens by flapping their arms (Knowles 2002: 42-44). These social gatherings also included jubas, a form of African step dance called the giouba in which two male dancers competed within a circle of dancers to determine superior technique (Knowles 2002: 55-62). The recognition of winning the impromptu competitions was valued by participants as a means to prove their worth within the community. While the ring shouts are not explicit models of the modern tap jam, the act of dancing for acknowledgment of technical skill could be a precursor to a tap dancer creating her or his own performance identity through competitive rhythmic exchanges.

Ring shouts arose during the Great Awakening religious revival in the United States during the middle 1800's (Knowles 2002: 59). These dances combined the current fervour of Christian sects, such as Baptist and Protestant, with traditional African circle dances. They featured flat-footed shuffling movements and utilised a 'call and response' format. Knowles describes the ring shouts as

the African tradition of antiphonal call and response. A song leader, who was called the "the songster", called out directions to the dancers as they circled the altar. The dancers were called "shouters"...A chorus of singers, called "basers", answered the lines called out by the leader, clapping and patting as they sang. (2002: 60)

Participants entered a trance state during the dance and would fall out of the circle. The movement executed in the 'trance state' could not be verified by tap historians and individual gestures were not assigned specific meaning. The act of the participants evoking 'a trance state called "falling out" (Knowles 2002: 59) does not directly reflect the act of tap dancers challenging one another in the jam session but it does reveal a comparable format of a solo dancer breaking away from the established circle to execute movement from his or her own vocabulary.

Irish and English immigrants contributed their own dance practices to the evolution of the dance form. Dance historians such as Knowles (2002) and Hill (2010) maintain that the competitive nature of the jam session derived from Irish step dancers and Lancashire clog dancers during the nineteenth century and the contests held to determine the best dancers. The performers were judged on their posture, speed, and musicality of their steps. These competitions developed amongst factory workers in cotton mills located in

Lancashire, England during the Industrial Revolution.⁵ Knowles describes the contests which were

held to see who could produce the most varied rhythms and sounds. This type of competitive dancing later figured prominently in the development of challenges which became a staple of the American tap dance world. (2002: 16)

The informal clogging contests conducted by English and Irish factory workers may have influenced early American tap challenges but whether they gave way to the initiation of tap jams cannot be determined. Historical accounts found in literature by dance historian Knowles (2002) are often records of observation by performers. These observations provide insight into the practices of English clog dancers but do not give conclusive evidence that the tap jams originated with forms such as Lancashire Clog. The English clog dancers contributed to the competitive spirit of tap challenges and offered rhythmic inspiration as Hill maintains:

[f]orms such as the Lancashire Clog did not simply give rise to or even get replaced by “tap dancing” but instead added to the variety of rhythms and styles in tap, and in turn were renovated rhythmically. (2010: 28)

English and Irish immigrants continued the practice of competitive contests in the United States.⁶ Clogging steps such as waltz clogs and hornpipes were integrated into performances of practitioners such as Barney Fagan and Lotta Crabtree (Hill 2010: 27-28). Observations by American author Mark Twain of African American slaves dancing on Mississippi riverboats during the 1840’s also allude to a possible origin of tap jam sessions; he describes the performers dancing jubas and participating in keelboat breakdowns, events in which a fiddler would play and dancers would perform to the music, interacting with the musician (Knowles 2002: 63). These breakdowns

were also competitive in nature and featured performers who embellished their own individual steps in an attempt to gain recognition as the most accomplished dancer. The element of competition is present in the African and English and Irish movement traditions and was reflected in the practice of constant innovation in the early tap challenges and tap jams.

Connections can be drawn between tap jam sessions and early minstrel shows of the 1840's. During the mid to late nineteenth century the popularity of dances such as Jump Jim Crow became features in theatrical shows.⁷ During the 1830s and 1840s, the 'flat-footed shuffles, mixed with the Irish jig' (Knowles 2002: 82), highlighted how a hybrid dance form evolved from constant innovation between ethnic groups. The flat-footed shuffling steps combined with other dance traditions such as the cakewalk and had 'a tremendous impact on theatrical performances' (Hill 2010: 33). The minstrel shows featured four parts or acts. The second part, the olio, ended with a group dance number featuring solos by every performer while encircled by other performers singing and clapping. The solos consisted of improvised and original steps. The olio presented each performer with an opportunity for the solo to showcase his or her unique performance style. The fourth part of these minstrel shows was a finale that featured all performers walking about the stage and into the audience performing cakewalk dances. The cakewalk was inspired by West African festival dances and was traditionally performed by slaves on plantations in the Southern United States in an attempt to ridicule their owners.⁸ Hill (2010: 34) describes the cakewalk in minstrel shows as, 'the grand finale...in which couples danced, promenaded, and pranced in a circle, improvising fancy steps in competition'. The transition of the cakewalk from plantation

to stage allowed the improvised steps in African festival dances to be performed in a theatrical setting. Performing the cakewalk demonstrates a desire to re-interpret movement performed by others with the intent to produce a new and possibly better variation, a trait common in the jam session where tap dancers often challenge each other by performing their interpretation of another practitioner's step. The use of improvised steps by performers in minstrel shows to compete for applause parallels the competitive nature early tap challenges. While it cannot be conclusively determined if the tap jams are directly derived from the olios of minstrel shows, the popularity of the improvised steps in cakewalks highlighted the need for performers to seek new methods to generate performance material.

In the early twentieth century the expansion of minstrel and vaudeville shows into established theatre circuits brought tap dance to a wider audience. Vaudeville shows required tap dancers to develop gimmicks and hone specialty skills such as roller skating, acrobatics, or vocal impersonations to stay employable. Lacking any formal training, many performers improvised their steps during performance and later perfected these through rehearsal. Interaction with other performers on the touring circuits, such as the T.O.B.A. or Theatre Owners Booking Association formed in 1907 and the Keith Circuit in 1908 provided opportunity for inspiration and exchanging of steps. The initial act of sharing steps in a group setting began to take form with tap dancers watching other acts or showing each other steps backstage.⁹

The move to Broadway and other permanent theatres during the twentieth century provided tap dancers with more varied and available sources for developing their

repertoire. Many performers were contracted for several shows a day, sometimes in multiple theatres, and time between shows could be utilised to interact with other tap dancers. Observing other acts performing in close proximity offered the possibility of new steps to incorporate into their routines. Larger productions, such as *Shuffle Along* (1921), *Dixie to Broadway* (1924), and later Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds* of 1928 (1928) would often include multiple tap and vernacular dance acts.¹⁰ Dance routines featuring dancers stepping in rhythmic unison in solo, duet, and chorus formations became more popular as choreographers such as Ned Wayburn explored the potential of tap dance (Hill 2010: 32).¹¹ Wayburn's approach to cultivating simple and precise rhythms with large choruses created new opportunities for solo and small team tap acts to create complex and identifiable interpretations of tap steps (Hill 2010: 33). The popular format of the two-man tap dance act allowed performers opportunities to work together to develop new material.¹² To maintain their individuality in performance, tap dancers would improvise to discover new ways to re-interpret the steps they gleaned from other tap dancers to bolster their own act.¹³ The most imaginative tap dancers were the most lucrative for producers, as they always produced inventive combinations to entertain audiences. The emphasis on individual performance style created a means for audience members to identify performers, generating marketable resources for productions.¹⁴

The need for constant innovation brought performers together. The tap jam sessions at the Hoofers Club, located in the basement of a building two doors away from the Lafayette Theatre at Seventh Avenue between 131st and 132nd streets in Harlem, became a prominent location for tap dancers to assemble in the 1920's and 1930's. The building housed a club originally known as the 'Comedy Club' owned by Lonnie Hicks.

In a small side room, no more than thirty by twenty feet, was a wooden floor and a piano. In between shows and after the night clubs closed, tap dancers gathered to improvise steps from their own repertoire as well as creating new steps. Another location for tap dancers to meet was the back alley behind the famous Apollo Club in New York City. Between shows, and often following the last performance, tap dancers from all the acts improvised together or worked on developing a new step. The late American tap practitioner Gregory Hines recalls his time as a child in the alley behind the Apollo with ‘Sandman’ Sims in George Nierenberg’s documentary *About Tap* (1985):

So now I’m back here with Sandman...and we’re trading steps back and forth, and I’m watching his feet while I’m dancing...and we’re going back and forth, back and forth, really fast until I get relaxed...I must have learned about hundred steps back here.

The informal jam sessions featured the practice of ‘trading steps’. Trading steps refers to a sharing of steps among performers, with the intention of performers ‘showing one another up’ (Hill 2010: 3). Tap dancers experimented with replicating steps while re-interpreting them into their own rhythmic preferences. Performers would gather in groups and improvise together, similar to jazz musicians participating in a jam session. The steps they improvised consisted of their own movements as well as elements they adapted from other performers’ steps. Tap practitioner and historian Rusty Frank (1990: 47) explains: ‘[t]his was just the business. Tap dancers emulated each other’s’ steps; that is, as much as they could, and then refashioned the steps to become their own’. The tap jams promoted an unspoken code of maintaining an individual style. Exact replication of another performer’s steps in totality was not accepted and resulted in severe chastising from other performers with the unspoken rule of ‘Thou Shalt Not

Copy Another's Steps – exactly' (Stearns and Stearns 1968: 338). The penalty for blatant copying of another performer's steps resulted in exclusion from performances and venues. Trademark steps were a tap dancer's most employable asset and carefully guarded.¹⁵ At these jam sessions, the intention to re-interpret another performer's tap step through exaggeration was still present but in a more competitive nature, usually reserved for highlighting technical skill and rhythmic style rather than mocking an individual. Stearns and Stearns describes how tap dancer John 'Bubber' Sublett, also known as 'Bubbles', possessed the ability to adapt steps with such ease that he gained notoriety among members of the Hoofers Club in Harlem in the 1930's for his trick of re-interpreting another dancer's steps:

Watching another dancer practicing at the Hoofers Club, Bubbles bides his time until he sees something he can use. "Oh-oh" he says, shaking his head in alarm, "you lost the beat back there – now try that step again". The dancer starts only to be stopped, again and again, until Bubbles, having learned it, announces, "You know, that reminds me of a step I used to do," and proceeds to demonstrate two or three variations on the original step. (1968: 214)

The technique employed by 'Bubbles' was not deliberate in intent to ridicule but still carried the same spirit of the cakewalk performed in vaudeville shows: the more adaptations of a step a tap dancer could create, the larger his performance repertoire. Tap dancers with a broader vocabulary of tap steps could continue to adapt to new show requirements and remain in employment longer.

The shifting role of tap dance in theatrical productions created a demand for different methods to train and utilise performers.¹⁶ The training that tap dancers received back stage and in dance studios ensured their constant employment as tap dance moved from the vaudeville stage to films in the 1930s. The popularity of big musical films

continued the demand for tap dancers proficient in manipulating steps to match the rhythms of popular musical numbers.¹⁷ Directors and choreographers experimented with choruses of dancers to create sounds to supplement the music instead of relying on percussive instruments in the orchestra. Increasing the number of tap dancers on stage generated multiple possibilities for characterisation and musical accompaniment but also produced difficulties in presentation. To maintain clarity of sound and visual movement, routines for chorus performers were simple and repetitive as a necessity. A division between tap dancing and musical comedy technique was developed by choreographers such as Ned Wayburn.¹⁸ Tap dancers performed highly articulated footwork that produced a range of sounds while the choruses of musical comedies ‘combined pretty poses and pirouettes with several different types of kicking steps...soft-shoe tap steps were inserted in unexpected places in the phrase to add a pleasing variety or sense of surprise’ (Hill 2010: 83).

Dancing schools began to offer tap dance instruction during the 1920s and 1930s leading to codification of the steps and combinations frequently used in stage shows. Limited resources were also produced to supplement formal instruction.¹⁹ The format of group recitals for studios emerged as instructors sought to train tap dancers to manipulate steps and combinations to suit creative demands of productions. Group recitals featured short group numbers, solos, or duets by classes to showcase students performing tap to a variety of music and theatrical themes. American tap practitioner Brenda Bufalino describes her early tap training at a studio in the 1940s:

Miss Duffy introduced me to theatricality, props, and gimmicks. She created dances for our class with jump ropes, top hats, canes, and suitcases. She created solos for me on roller skates and pedestals. All of these dances were crowd pleasers, but she never sacrificed clear articulation for flash; we were both clear and flashy. (2004: 22)

Training at tap studios was individualised and determined by the instructor delivering the steps. Taught tap classes featured instruction which was primarily delivered through oral description by the instructor. There are no visual references for individuals to follow other than the physical presence of the teacher executing the steps and combinations. Description of the sound that the individual step produces is the preferred method by instructors to teach the steps. Correct execution of the individual elements within those combinations and steps is key for steps to be introduced into a new combination of the individual's own movement vocabulary. To clarify, 'elements' of a step are the individual components such as a heel drop, shuffle, or stomp. These elements are combined together in a sequence to create a step. The steps are structured together to create a combination or series of steps.²⁰ Musicality, especially correct accents and tones produced by performing the steps in sequence is the primary focus, not the exact duplication of the steps. To facilitate learning of codified steps, instructors would describe the steps and their elements by the sound they generate or as a sequence of rhythms.²¹

The selection of the dance school was dependent upon the gender and race of the performer. Hill describes how the variety of dance schools emerged during the early twentieth century:

the majority of white professional dancers in New York City learned tap dance in the studios of a Ned Wayburn or Billy Pierce, black males learned to tap dance on their own, in the dance hall or on the street, where dancing was hotly contested. Black females received instruction in Harlem dancing schools. (2010: 86-87)

The growing presence of dance studios highlighted how the role of the tap jams shifted in the training of upcoming performers. African-American male tap dancers wishing to establish a unique and memorable performance identity turned to the tap jams for the experience of elder practitioners (Hill 2010: 87). Established tap dancers attending the tap jams were recognised as individual performers; they featured as solo acts in early performances of vaudeville and minstrel shows could be found honing their skills at the tap jams. Upcoming tap dancers believed the performance knowledge of older tap dancers provided an edge in their own developing careers. The improvised performances of these experienced tap dancers constantly evolved but retained the trademark rhythmic interpretations that separated them from the uniformity of tap dancers in a chorus. The training and experience gained at tap jams allowed young tap dancers to expand and develop their own tap vocabulary at their discretion, providing they were willing to work hard to uphold the informal rules of exchanging steps and deferring to their mentors.

The competition to remain unique as a tap dancer contributed to the development of individual performance identities but within a theatrical context. To meet the creative needs for shows, tap dancers performed as characters such as Irish rogues or African servants in early minstrel and vaudeville shows (Hill 2010: 14). Tap historian Knowles (2002: 76) describes how performers developed characters that ‘became rougher and more uneducated’. Broadway shows featured male soloists and female chorus or comedy acts with a hen-pecked husband and over-bearing wife. African American practitioners strived to cultivate their own performance style but struggled to divest themselves of the exaggerated and comedic movements expected by audience

members. Cultural historian Brenda Dixon Gottschild writes that young tap dancers in the late twentieth century:

faced the formidable of amending the stereotype (in any way possible, while still appearing to go along with it) and redefining what a black role in minstrelsy could be; refashioning, through black design, the white-inflected form that was assumed to faithfully represent them. (1996: 83)

The racism associated with early minstrel shows and vaudeville carried collective memories for American tap dancers as tap practitioner Savion Glover explains that

tap more or less vanished from view, perceived as a relic from an outdated America. Young African-Americans in particular turned away from the form; they felt it to be reminiscent of a time when racial stereotyping was acceptable in popular culture. The image of a smiling tap dancer, shuffling on a stage for the appreciation of white audiences, was unacceptable...African Americans have been wounded by those stereotypes inherited from minstrel shows. We didn't want to see ourselves strutting and gliding. The artists were hurt because they seemed to represent something we couldn't be proud of. (2000: 29-31)

Tap dancers simultaneously struggled to disengage themselves from the stereotypes of the early twentieth century as they sought to use recognisable portrayals of characters in productions to increase their employability (Graves 2000). Inclusion of steps such as the cakewalk entertained and simultaneously reinforced racial stereotypes for performers. Gottschild (2001: 332) argues that '[f]or Americans, the Africanist legacy is not a choice but an imperative that comes to us through the culture'. In the 1930s, the roles of African-Americans on stage and in film reflected the legacy of racial prejudice after the U.S. Supreme Court passed the 'separate but equal' status during the Plessy v. Ferguson Case (1896). Hill (2010: 98) describes the roles of white performers as 'wealthy, ambitious, and entrepreneurial' while African-American tap dancers often played domestic servants. The tap jam became associated with the representation of

the past. Training with mentors in a club became linked to the roles tap dancers traditionally took on stage.

Tap dance receded from the public eye in the 1960s and 1970s. The young tap dancers attending the tap jams viewed the events as links to the past, but a past they could not connect with in the shifting political perspectives of the time period.²² The confines of racial and gender stereotypes from early minstrel and vaudeville performance ideals still impacted on the financial and social existence of these performers.

Tap dance experienced a renaissance during the late 1970s and 1980s (Hill 2010: 218). Despite the waning and waxing of the dance form's popularity with the public, the exchanging of steps continued and transitioned from tiny back rooms in a club to the stage. During the early 1970s tap jams became regular events at the New York Jazz Museum (Hill 2010: 302). Venues from small clubs to individuals' apartments became impromptu sites for tap dancers to gather and share steps. In the 1990s, Jimmy Slyde established tap jams at a club called La Cave, creating 'an educational training ground unlike any other; it was to tap dancers in the 1990s what the Hoofers Club was to dancers in the 1920s and 1930s' (Hill 2010: 302). La Cave set precedence among the other tap jams by introducing a more structured approach to the exchanging of steps. Hill explains the role of La Cave in the progression of tap jams in the United States:

La Cave, however, was one of the first to materialize the idea of instructional improvisatory performance: relatively inexperienced tap dancers were welcomed to the onstage circle to improvise solos and trade choruses with dancers and musicians while being observed by a non-judgmental drinking "audience" sitting at the bar and small tables. (2010: 302)

La Cave transferred the process of exchanging tap steps between tap dancers from a private space to a public stage. Experienced performers such as Jimmy Slyde, Chuck Green, and Buster Brown would perform improvised solos with the musicians, showcasing steps and techniques developed from years of improvisation to provide new tap dancers with inspiration for their own explorations.

The tap jams of the late twentieth century in the United States highlighted the issue of the generation gap between performers. Tap practitioners such as Slyde, Green, Brown and many of their peers were ageing and no longer performing. Their skills and knowledge were in danger of being 'lost' as the training they received was passed down orally and aurally as opposed to being documented or implemented into a syllabus system (Knowles 2002: 207). The tap jams reinforced the need to preserve and pass on the cultural history of the dance form through the sharing of improvised tap steps. The embodied knowledge of the dance form exists from the collective improvisations, challenges, and performances of tap dancers. Hill suggests that cultural exchanges manifested through individuals sharing verbal comments as well as physical steps at the tap jams. Anecdotes of performances, personal creation of steps accompanied instruction and sharing of steps. The memory of the practitioner and of his or her step is transmitted and transformed in the practice of shared and innovative practice within the community. Observation of another performer is a form of learning that could be associated with any dance form, but visual learning is a key component in tap dance and its evolution. The tap jams of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries continued to provide opportunities to learn steps but more importantly provide a source

for inspiration and a means to ensure the cultural history of the dance form would not be forgotten.

English Implementation

Touring revue shows and later films introduced English audiences to tap dance during the early twentieth century. Practitioners such as Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly were frequent features in Hollywood's musical films and lines of tapping chorus girls dominated theatrical productions.²³ Popular performances by recognised stars highlighted the technicality of complex rhythms and their execution as Stearns and Stearns write:

[t]he listener is no longer urged to participate – he is merely a spectator whose fantasies are perhaps nudged... and besides, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire are already executing steps that the audience would never dream of attempting. (1968: 114)

English audiences were exposed to a polished and perfected presentation of the dance form without knowledge of how performers developed their vocabulary through hours of improvisation and rhythmic experimentation. Audiences witnessed tap performances on stage and in films unaccompanied by anecdotes of practitioners or stories of tap challenges. The oral traditions that influenced improvised exchanges at tap jams in the United States were lost in the desire to showcase technical skill and to focus on entertainment. The presentation of the tap dance on stage, in film, and in dance schools eliminated inclusion of defined social contexts such as the tap jams of the

Hoofers Club. The experimentation cultivated by ethnic groups as a means to channel their creative energy was distilled down into easily replicated steps that could be transferred to new performers as shows toured. English audience members began to associate tap dance with a skill to be learned and equated with individual elements to be mastered within a performance context. The connection between music and tap steps highlighted the choreography rather than individual personal expression and interpretation.

In England the demand to study tap dance led to its inclusion into the syllabi of several dance societies and associations in the early twentieth century. The rigorous and frequent technical training witnessed in American dance studios, in combination with high performance standards and a polished personal appearance inspired British practitioners.²⁴ Practitioners such as Zelia Raye and Joan Davis travelled to the United States during the 1920s to learn more about this dance form and the most efficient methods to incorporate tap dance into syllabus teaching (Eddleston 2002: 11-12). Various examination boards for dance emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century to meet the need for professional dance training for the stage in tap dance and other dance styles such as ballet and ballroom.²⁵ The organisations represented the first shift in tap practice as it was incorporated into English culture. Dance scholar Stacey Prickett writes that

[a] central component of British culture is found in various boards and academies with codified approaches to artistic development and standardisation. Through objective criteria, skill levels can be measured through the examination process, providing internationally recognised levels of achievement. (2004: 1)

Organisations such as the Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing were formed with the intention of creating a regulated and examinable method for improving teaching standards and providing professional training for dancers (Buckland 2007: 2). In 1892 the British Association of Teachers of Dancing was founded as a gathering point for professionals and teachers to work together to promote learning and teaching dance in many forms to a high standard (Buckland 2011: 90). Still active presently, it is the first recorded association devoted to developing dance training within a regulated framework. Its inception laid the foundation for further expansion in dance education and teacher training. Tap dance was first introduced in 1932 as part of the syllabus for the Stage Branch of the ISTD (Eddleston 2002: 11).

Initially, several small groups of teachers formed associations such as the Manchester and Salford Association of Teachers of Dancing, the English Association of Dancing Masters, the Universal Association of Teachers of Dancing, and the Yorkshire Association of Dancing Masters in the first decade of the century. In 1902 the Midlands Dance Teachers' Association formed with the goal of advancing the training of dancers and teachers. During the successive years, the smaller associations merged together forming the International Dancing Masters' Association in the Northwest region of England and in the Midlands the Dance Teachers' Association grew out of various expansions and mergers with the Empire Society. In 1967 the International Dance Teachers' Association was formed from the joining of the Dance Teachers' Association and the International Dancing Masters' Association. In London, the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing was founded in 1904, with the mission of creating an organisation to improve teaching and training standards in various dance forms. Similar to the

British Association of Teachers of Dancing, the ISTD remained a singular society without incorporating smaller associations into its overall organisational structure (IDTA, 2009). The associations and societies each included branches or faculties that included several dance styles. The IDTA and the ISTD both possess a branch dedicated to 'theatre dance' that includes dance forms such as jazz and tap that could be found in popular stage productions, such as musical theatre shows. As the popularity of tap dance increased in the early twentieth century, members of these associations proclaimed it an inevitability that tap dance should be incorporated into the curriculums of these branches (Eddleston 2002: 98).

The origins of syllabus teaching in England play a significant role in introducing tap dancing to the public. Zelia Raye contributed to the formation of the Stage Branch for the ISTD in 1932 and later founded the Modern Theatre Branch for the ISTD in 1954. Raye believed in systematic and rigorous training to develop professional dancers and devised techniques to enhance flexibility, as seen in her article 'Limbering and Stretching' published in the *Dancing Times* (Raye 1927: 1). In her initial visit to the United States, Raye (1936: 1) drew inspiration from American modern dance practitioners in addition to tap instructors. She attended classes and performances by Denishawn, continuing to absorb ideas from a 'modern' (Foulkes 2002: 25) approach to teaching students.²⁶ In Denishawn she discovered the focus on individual understanding of the rhythms as a model that she could develop for teaching tap dance. Raye determined that the best method was replication of the rhythms for assessment by trained professional teachers. Preparation for the exams would ensure students could

demonstrate an understanding of the rhythms prepared for the amalgamations and routines. Raye seized on the opportunity to teach tap dance in this new format as a

different and more attractive form in which it is now put forward as compared with earlier interpretations. The attraction of the dance in its present form is the result of an advanced understanding of rhythm. Old-fashioned Tap Dancing in the form of steps only had its limitations, but with the introduction of syncopation and rhythm, a great change has taken place. There is perhaps very little difference in the actual technique but the study of advanced rhythm has enabled us to introduce such variations of the same steps as to make the dance appear much more attractive than formerly. (1936: 2-3)

Raye believed analysis of the rhythms would allow her to present this dance form to students in a clear and replicable manner and worked to incorporate her teaching methods as part of the curriculum within the Theatre Branch of the ISTD.

The ISTD library contains some primary and secondary sources documenting the historical development of the organisation, the examination process, and the syllabi for each branch of the ISTD. Articles written by ISTD Stage Branch founder Zelia Raye (1934, 1936) in journals such as *Dance Journal* provided a historical context for how Raye developed the syllabus.²⁷ In these articles I was able to identify influences from American tap practice and how Raye adapted her techniques to suit English students.²⁸

The archival research provided me with an in-depth understanding of the tap dance syllabus content and examination criteria. Other practitioner and instructors followed suit and soon other associations and societies, such as the British Association of Teachers of Dancing, offered tap dance as part of their syllabi. Raye (1936: ix) incorporated her methods of teaching tap within the ISTD, citing a desire to ‘to raise the standard to equal that of our American cousins’. Many American tap dancers mastered complex rhythms and developed their sense of musicality due to the close relationship between tap dancer and musicians. Improvisation to live music, a foundation in the

creation of the dance form in the United States was not present in the introduction of the examination framework in England.

The dance organisations provided members of the public with the opportunity to study tap dance within a structure that offered clear and consistent advancement through mastery of a carefully selected vocabulary of movement. Initially, these organisations offered the study of tap dance as an option within an overall curriculum of dance training. The Theatre Branch for the IDTA and the Modern Theatre Dance Branch within the ISTD both included tap dance as a component within the comprehensive study of theatre dance. Raye (1936: vii) sought to integrate tap dance into the curriculum of the ISTD upon her return from the United States: '[i]t was realised that Tap Dancing was gaining ground rapidly and growing in much favour and that sufficient attention was not given it by the Imperial Society'. Raye created a new branch within the ISTD, the Stage Branch. The Stage Branch issued its first syllabus in 1932 with the intention of 'bringing its members in touch with the theatrical profession; developing and maintaining a high standard of modern stage dancing; and assisting qualified members in obtaining professional engagements' (Eddleston 2002: 23). The first examinations were held in 1933 and a children's syllabus was published by the ISTD in 1934. Raye and her colleague Joan Davis continued to develop tap dance within the Stage Branch. In 1936 the syllabus included fourteen tap steps and Time Steps and Breaks to three different rhythms including 'Fox Trot', 'Schottische', and 'One Step' (The ISTD 1936: [1]). Two years later, the glossary increased to thirty-five tap steps and included a simple 'Stage Chart', naming eight basic directions: front, back, left, right, left diagonal front, right diagonal front, left diagonal back and right

diagonal back (The ISTD 1938: [1]). The 1940 syllabus contained the addition of 'slow' and 'quick' routines to the duration of thirty-two bars and a 'Fox Trot' rhythm (The ISTD 1940: [1]). The 1949 syllabus consisted of 'divisions' of 'Junior' and 'Senior' levels (The ISTD 1949: [1]).

In successive years, the syllabus incorporated further influences from Raye and Davis' expanding performance knowledge. The 1954 Modern Stage Dance Branch Grade Examinations featured 'the basic Symbols of Kinetography (Labanotation)' (The ISTD 1954: [1]). These two charts depicted the eight directions from previous syllabi but utilised the symbols of Laban's notational system to reference the positions of the feet and arms. In 1967 the examinations for the children's grades were divided into steps that required one or two sounds, with the more advanced exams requiring students to execute steps that produced two sounds. The changes to the Tap Syllabus reflect Raye's initial desire to create an organisation for tap dance training that focused on achieving professional standards in musicality and theatrical presentation. In an article written for *Dance Journal* in March 1949 Raye comments on the mission of the Stage Dance Branch. Eddleston describes her goals as:

[t]he standard of Stage Dancing depends on the dictates of taste and fashion, therefore an educated audience is equally important in improving the taste and standard. We as teachers should be the first to recognise the changes that are taking place so that we can live up to the aims of the Branch, i.e., "to develop and maintain a high standard of modern Stage dancing". (2002: 99)

Raye's use of 'taste and fashion' as guides in raising the standard of performance indicates the impact of the performances by American tap practitioners. Raye understood that English audiences frequently attended touring shows and films

featuring American tap practitioners and wanted English tap dancers to produce a similar level of professionalism. Her observations of American tap performance and practice continued to influence her training methods as she adapted the tap syllabus for English students.

The Modern Stage Dance Branch syllabi of the 1980's and 1990's presented new identities for the tap syllabus including the 'Tap Branch' of the Modern Theatre Branch (1981), 'Modern and Tap' syllabus (1989), and 'Tap Technique' (1990). The continuous modification of the title for the syllabus reflects the alterations of the curricula throughout the ISTD as the demand for various dance styles continued to grow. The need for differentiation of syllabi demonstrated the popularity of the ISTD and its new styles of dance is referenced on the organisation's website: '[t]he grade and the major syllabi were revised in the 1980s to reflect the influence of American Tap on British Musical Theatre' (<http://www.istd.org/tap-dance/about/>, 2011).

In 2005 a drastic change to the tap dance syllabus occurred in the inclusion of detailed 'Aims and Objectives' (The ISTD 2005: [1-2]). The first two pages of the syllabus included learning outcomes and clear routes of progression. The emphasis on the rationale for the syllabus and examination procedure as well as safe practice dominated the introduction to the curriculum. The syllabus now resembled educational material produced by United Kingdom government organizations such as Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education. Whereas the early syllabi contained an abbreviated description of the exam process and awards, the syllabus for 2005 tripled in the number of pages and content.

The current syllabus in use since 2009 includes the first mention of improvisation in the entire history of tap dance in the Modern Theatre Branch of the ISTD. The Tap Dance Faculty for grades one through three presents two distinct references to improvisational ‘games’ in the syllabus. The Primary Tap Class Exam requires students to participate in the rhythm exercise ‘Take a Bite of the Music’ which ends with ‘8 counts of improvisation, seen 1 at a time, responding to the music’ (The ISTD 2009: [2]). The Grade 1 Tap includes a rhythm exercise entitled ‘Rhythm B Improvisation’ in which the students are required to ‘Improvise all together using quarter notes, eighths and missed beats’ (The ISTD 2009: [5]). Grades 2 and 3 incorporate rhythm exercises in which students demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by clapping or tapping a response to the music or a rhythm clapped out by an examiner. The steps required to establish rhythmic understanding by the students are not specified in the syllabus. The final examinations, however, will not include any ‘unset work’ as specified in the syllabus outline (The ISTD 2009: [5]).

The twenty-first century brought significant changes to tap practice in England. North American tap practitioners such as Heather Cornell travelled to England to host master classes and workshops.²⁹ With each visit, Cornell would suggest the concept of a tap jam. In 2005 Cornell, with Graham and Deb Norris put on a tap jam in England. The jam was a single event with limited attendance at a small club in London. The first tap jam hosted by Norris and Cornell and inspired two tap practitioners in England, Jess Murray and Junior Laniyan.

Murray is a white-British woman in her early thirties who possessed a dance background, having undertaken studies in dance forms such as jazz, contemporary and the ISTD tap syllabus. In 2002 Murray travelled to New York City to attend tap festivals, workshops and master classes in search of a more informal approach to learn tap dance. Murray was exposed to the tap jams in the clubs and bars of New York City. In 2006 the first tap jams in Manchester took place in a clubs and bars and were sparsely attended. Two tap jams were advertised as ‘family’ events in order to draw more prospective tap dancers, but attendance remained low. Murray initiated The Tap Rhythm Project in 2008 with Annette Walker, an African British woman in her early thirties. Her creation of the Tap Rhythm Project aimed to provide a single source that allowed individuals and groups, such as schools, to attain knowledge of the dance form. Murray hoped to accomplish this goal through her conception of an archive containing resources such as written documents, audio recordings, visual images and videos pertaining to tap dance and its history. The archive is one of many facets in Murray’s overall desire to achieve cultural awareness of the art form in England, to ‘increase public awareness of the rich cultural history of tap dance and celebrate the achievements of Tap Masters past and present’ (www.tapproject.org, 2009). In 2008 the tap jams became increasingly regular events in Manchester. Similar to the tap jams witnessed by Murray in the United States, the events were held at small clubs instead of large theatres. Murray also organised a tap jam for students in February 2009 at the Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts. The tap jam was held in the Student Union bar and presented as a social activity with a live student band.

The tap jams in London were founded by Junior Laniyan. Laniyan is an African British man in his late twenties and possesses a performance background, having trained as a dancer and actor since the age of nine. His education in tap dance consisted of multiple teachers with specialties in a variety of dance styles, from Lindy Hop to contemporary. He did not engage in any tap syllabus studies. His early tap dance experience was shaped by Derek Hartley, a teacher at Pineapple Dance Studios in London. Hartley encouraged Laniyan to perform tap dance and frequently included him in public performances. He professes that his true education in tap dance came later in his training, when he attended a performance at the Southbank Centre in London at age fifteen and experienced Tobias Tak performing rhythm tap live. Laniyan identified this performance as his first instance in viewing rhythm tap with live music. An invitation to perform and study with Tak provided Laniyan with the opportunity to broaden his tap dance education. In studying with Tak, Laniyan was exposed to videos of tap dance practitioners from the United States and gained an introduction to jazz music. This led Laniyan (2009) to ‘really start to see the history; and I got to learn about it and the music you could make with your feet as well’. His early training neglected structured syllabus work and he credits this omission as a key factor in his development as an artist. Despite this relatively open training, Laniyan (2009) expressed that he felt unfulfilled as a tap artist and it was Tak’s performance of rhythm tap that created the realization of ‘this exactly where I want to go with it’ in his development as a practitioner. His performance experience with both Tak and Hartley focused on rhythm, musicality, and improvisation. Laniyan credits these features in his education as lending him the confidence to incorporate teaching into his practice and to attempt to perform and experience tap dance in the United States. After travelling to New York

City at the age of seventeen in 1998, Junior Laniyan (2009) claimed to be inspired by the tap jams he participated in at clubs such as Swing46. It was observing tap dancers 'express themselves' that led Laniyan to identify a need in London for a similar event. Laniyan (2009) revealed that he had never attended a tap jam in England and felt that an event of this nature would benefit tap dancers who had limited exposure to rhythm tap outside of a structured class environment, to have the 'experience of not being in that class atmosphere'. In this statement, Laniyan not only identifies the lack of such an event in the English tap practice, but the omission of improvisation and live music that coincides with tap jams in American tap communities. Laniyan's experience of witnessing tap jams in New York City and observing Tobias Tak perform to live music opened him to the possibilities of incorporating live improvised performance in his own tap practice and to share his skills with other tap dancers.

In London, the first official tap jam took place at Oxygen in 2006. The jam was well attended and produced interest among tap dancers and jazz enthusiasts in London. Junior Laniyan, Melody Lander, and Dan Sheridan are identified as the original organisers of the London Tap Jam. Lander and Sheridan are white-British tap enthusiasts in their early thirties. Lander engaged with ISTD syllabus classes in her initial tap training but Sheridan came to tap dance through his involvement in Morris and clog dancing. Both individuals met through participation in rhythm tap classes led by Laniyan. The jam initiated as a bi-monthly event but progressed to a monthly event housed in different bars around London's Soho district before settling in Ronnie Scott's Upstairs bar in October 2009. Prior to this arrangement, it was housed in Digress,

another bar in Soho, and on a bimonthly schedule. The late American veteran tap practitioner Will Gaines confirmed the tap jams in London are a recent phenomenon:³⁰

it's only just started...it took so long to get started here. Somebody would come up and probably show you something, you know 'cause they always want to show you something, but never like what you see Junior doing. (2009)

Gaines (2009) recalled invitations to dance with street buskers during his early residency in the late 1960s as, 'the closest you'll get to jamming is buskers, doing their gig in the streets. Now what Junior and them have started, that's what used to happen in America'.

The Role of Music in American and English Tap Jams

In historical texts describing early American tap challenges, the musical influences of African and Irish immigrants are frequently mentioned in references to musical structures such as Jig and Waltz by Stearns and Stearns (1968), Knowles (2002) and Hill (2010). As tap dancers became featured in minstrel, vaudeville, and Broadway shows in the early twentieth century, the dance form developed in tandem with jazz music as jazz historian Brian Harker (2008: 82) claims: 'music and dance interacted so closely in the venues that presented early jazz to the public'. The variety of musical accompaniment used in the shows of American tap dancers influenced the steps they exchanged at the jams. Hill maintains that the tandem evolution of jazz music and tap dance allowed performers to explore rhythms and individual performance identities:

[t]he speedy, swinging, rhythmic propulsion of this modern drum dancing – dissonant in the clatter of its taps, yet exciting in its offbeat, rhythms – defined the new Jazz Age twenties and sounded out a new breed of artists who would finally “shed the costume of the shuffling darky”. (2010: 90)

The opportunity to present their interpretation of the music, similar to jazz soloists, allowed tap dancers to become established performers on their own, separate to the chorus or other specialty acts.

The relationship between tap jams and music in the United States is rarely discussed in the later decades of the twentieth century. Stearns and Stearns (1968), Hill (2010), and Knowles (2002) link the progression of tap dance to early jazz such as rag time and swing, but do not dwell on the musical connection after 1950. American tap practitioner Savion Glover cites the shift in musical preferences of performers in the 1960s as a reason for the decline in performance and lack of documentation:

Unlike earlier periods, when developments in tap followed changes in music, in the sixties tap did not accompany the sounds arising out of the African American community. People didn't tap to rock and roll. People didn't tap to soul music or Motown...in the late sixties and the seventies, funk was in. But when it came time to tap dance, dancers didn't dance to the music they were partying to. That played a big part in what happened to tap, why it got so restricted. The dancers themselves didn't keep their act current with the culture. (2000: 31, 35)

The creation of music reflective of their ethnic community generated obstacles for improvising tap dancers. Musical genres such as Motown contained lyrical content that addressed the inequalities facing ethnic minorities in the United States, as African American historian Mark Anthony Neal explains:

Motown became a very visible icon of the economic and social opportunities afforded African-Americans during the 1960s. Gordy's project legitimately transformed young working-class and working-poor youth – Diana Ross, Eddie Kendricks, and Smokey Robinson all grew up in Detroit's federal housing projects – into social icons that the traditional Civil Rights movement could appropriate in service to its own strategy for racial integration. (1998: 45)

Popular music in the late twentieth century was an awkward juxtaposition to smiling tap dancers portraying roles of a lower social class such as butlers and beggars in theatrical productions and films while African-American youth marched for equal rights. The music of the tap jams continued to serve as a link to the history of the dance form: the rhythms and steps continued to be passed down alongside with the experiences of past performers.

The role of music in tap dance's development in England is contextualised through historical accounts of performance. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the frequency of tap performances in English music halls and theatres increased. Hill (2010: 50-54) describes the transmission of precision chorus dancing back and forth across the Atlantic with companies such as the Tiller Girls in English music halls and performances of the Gaiety Girls in New York City. The popularity of these shows and later Ziegfield's productions increased the English public's exposure to tap dance as individual tap dancers were often featured as part of the shows. In the first performances of American tap dancers in England the link between tap dance and music can be identified. Stearns and Stearns claims the response of theatre critics to William Henry Lane's performances provides insight into how English audiences initially perceived the dance form:

[t]he emphasis here upon the variety of leg movements, with no mention of body movements, suggests the influence of the Irish Jig. On the other hand, references to the Single and Double Shuffle may indicate the addition of Afro-American elements. The comparison of Lane's dancing to "fingers on a tambourine," moreover, furnishes the best clue to what made the performance outstanding: rhythm. (1968: 47)

Lane was presented as a performer without the context of how he achieved his success or the environment in which he developed his skills.³¹ The English audiences viewed his rhythms in the familiar surroundings of a professional theatre and a musical showcase. Stearns and Stearns suggests the lack of cultural context allowed English critics to view tap performance for its musical and performance potential:

[t]hese critics were all familiar with British dances such as the Jig, the Reel, the Hornpipe, and the Clog. What made them write about Lane's dancing as if it were altogether different? The answer seems to be, in the words of the London critic, "the manner in which he beats time with his feet." For in the person of William Henry Lane, the blend of British folk with American Negro dance in the United States had, by 1848, resulted in a striking new development. So foreign observers, who were in a position to view its emergence objectively, treated it as an original creation. (1968: 47)

The critic's response implies the fascination with Lane's performance which supersedes his ethnicity or social background. Lane is acknowledged as an individual, a 'person' and a combination of 'British folk and American Negro', suggesting a hybrid performance rather than a clear stereotype of an African-American character dancer.³²

During the twentieth century, the evolution of music and tap dance maintained separate spheres within training and performance contexts in England. The relationship between jazz music and tap dance is acknowledged by Raye as a key factor in tap dance yet absent from English dance studios. The inclusion of yearly recitals featuring routines performed to a variety of popular music and jazz standards equipped American tap dancers with enhanced rhythmical awareness. Eddleston writes how Raye frequently

commented on the environment of the dancers she observed in America, citing how the musical surroundings also influenced the dancers' performance:

[m]ost American girls have a natural talent for tempo and rhythm, so essential to a dancer. And this is not surprising since every American home is a jazz stronghold and America's daughters are brought up on syncopated rhythm...There is a great demand at the present time for buck and rhythm dancing, and a number of dancers are unsuccessful at auditions because of their ignorance of this branch of work...The formation of this method commenced with the experience I gained in America. I think that owing to the close proximity of the American Negro a more instinctive rhythm has been developed in the American race than is possessed by ourselves, and for that reason I wanted to develop a more explicit method of teaching here. (2002: 68-72)

Raye's use of the term 'proximity' suggests awareness of the separate social spaces occupied by white students and African-American instructors but the issues of race and gender are not discussed in detail in any of her articles or in the limited literature existing on the history of tap dance in England.³³ In her instructional book on tap dance Raye recalls her observations of classes and performances during her stays in the United States, but never references attendance at a tap jam. Eddleston writes of Raye's visits to American studios:

the coloured teaching staff, and all the ingenious tap rhythm steps with which the black American seems to overflow. Rhythm with the feet – strumming on the ukulele or a few blue chords on the piano – you can't leave an atmosphere like this without getting something, that something which makes tap dancing so much nearer the artistic than one can imagine possible. (2002: 79)

Her description of 'teaching staff' suggests her exposure to tap dancers was limited to formal classroom settings with clearly defined roles reflective of African-American performers and white audiences in theatres and clubs.³⁴ Her acknowledgement of the African-American teacher as inspiration for tap dancers hints at the role of cultural influences of music but does not explain how the teacher developed an awareness of

rhythm and music. As a white female dancer, Raye was not allowed to witness the tap jams at the Hoofers Club and the improvised exchanging of steps and rhythms. In her visits to dance studios Raye would not be aware of the social relationships developed by performers through the tap jams and their impact on young tap dancers.

American and English Tap Jams: a Comparative Perspective

A convergence of multiple social influences contributed to the tap jams serving as a central point for American tap practitioners to gather and work towards a collective development of the dance form. Although not a formal club, the members of the Hoofers Club gained entrance by an informal initiation. The room was available to dancers performing in nightclubs and theatres at all times for tap dancers to rehearse, but to truly be welcomed into the 'club' dancers needed to demonstrate an ability to improvise in jam sessions. Members of the club were male African American performers working in theatres and clubs in Harlem and throughout New York City. Very few white performers employed in the vaudeville and Broadway shows frequented the club. Anecdotes reveal that the occasional chorus girl or female tap dancer entered the front rooms of the club but they were not allowed into the back room with the male hoofers (Stearns and Stearns 1968: 338). Young hoofers new to the performance scene in Harlem had to be able to trade steps with seasoned professionals. Dancers were not allowed to be in the room simply to observe without their own contribution, fetching

drinks for older dancers or providing a newly interpreted version of another member's step in a jam session (Stearns and Stearns 1968: 338).

The act of meeting to exchange music and dance practice enabled American tap dancers to bond and create a new social structure. Older tap practitioners took on the role of mentor for upcoming performers attending the tap jams with the intention of expanding their personal repertoire. Younger tap dancers approached experienced performers with deference and respect was earned through proving improvisation and performance skills. A loose hierarchy was defined by age and performance experience rather than by economic wealth or social status. The majority of individuals attending the tap jams emerged from similar social classes as working performers, although a few practitioners enjoyed international fame.³⁵ Most tap dancers in attendance at tap jams were not known outside of the theatrical circuits.

The reliance on elder tap dancers for education and approval reflects a social process of belonging that created identities among young performers. The structure of mentor/elder and student/youngster was referred to as a 'brotherhood in rhythm' (Hill 2010: 246) by experienced tap dancers, inferring a shared belief in rhythmic exploration in the dance form. Earning a place in the brotherhood required a willingness to learn from elder tap dancers as mentors while developing an individual performance style. The name 'brotherhood' initially reflected the trend of only male tap dancers attending the Hoofers Club during the 1930s and 1940s but a shift occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Female tap dancers such as Brenda Bufalino studied and performed with Charles 'Honi' Coles, continuing the mentor/student relationship and increasing the

variety of individual performance styles. The inclusion of women in the mentor/student relationship did not alter the process of creating an identity as tap practitioners Brenda Bufalino and Tina Pratt (Hill 2010: 255) explain: '[r]hythm is rhythm. There is no masculine, no feminine. If you don't focus on rhythm, then you *are* open to the stereotypes...The only difference is personalities'. The tap jams created the environment for the tap young practitioners to engage in the interactive process of establishing their own performance identities with older practitioners supporting and nurturing their developing skills.

The evidence of an informal hierarchy in the American tap jams has been passed down orally through recollections of individual performers. The tap jams could be traced back to satirical traditions in both African and Irish storytelling. Hill argues that satire holds an essential role in the development of tap dance and the creation of the tap challenges:

The idea of equating the man-of-words with the man-of-action and associating the oral with the aural, in which satire is re-sounded in the feet, is based on the core notion that tap dance is an oral language...It functions...as an oral poetry that shapes acoustic space, as rhythmic language that expresses "acute Hibernian wit". (2010: 17)

For Hill, exchanging rhythms in tap challenges parallels verbal repartee. The 'satire re-sounded in the feet' refers to the practice of tap dancers mimicking another practitioner's performance style or altering the rhythms of steps spontaneously in performance. The ability to utilise rhythms as an expression of physical satire is valued among tap dancers as it incorporates humour into their movements and provides additional entertainment for the audience. Hill (2010: 19) cites examples of

practitioners from minstrel shows, vaudeville and Broadway integrating this practice of rhythmic satire with slapstick, singing, and storytelling into their performances.

Hill's implication of tap dance as an 'oral language' reveals another element that is exchanged at the tap jams: the history of the dance form. The history is present through the sharing of stories as well as steps and is embodied in each performance.³⁶ The practices of Irish story-telling and African American satirical songs as social past times are embedded in the improvised exchanges of the tap jams. Hill (2010: 220) describes the oral tradition of passing on tap steps and anecdotes as 'a vehicle for the survival of black heritage and culture'. Young tap dancers attending the tap jams in the twentieth century would learn the history of the dance form from their mentors in tandem to learning the steps. American tap dancer Savion Glover (2000: 67) explains, 'that's what tap is, that's what tap carries, history'.

Although music was a key factor in the early introduction of theatrical tap dance to England, the absence of performers exchanging practice delayed the implementation of tap jams. The social context of the tap jams in the United States was not transferred to England. The informal relationships of mentor and new performer at tap jams were replaced with a clear teacher and student association. The opportunity to bond and share performance experiences was replaced with a focus on developing repertoire and skills for paid performance. The lack of cultural exchange was not addressed until the late twentieth and early twenty-first century with the introduction of the tap jams.

The differing practices and performances in the United States and England contributed to how the dance form was taught in each country. The presentation and teaching of codified tap steps differs in prescriptive literature for both countries. In the United States tap steps are associated with locations unique to America such as the Cincinnati, the Chicago, or Shuffle off to Buffalo (Knowles 1998: 35-36, 48). American tap steps incorporate vernacular dance steps such as the Charleston or Bunny Hop (Knowles 1998: 36, 39, 42). Terminology of tap steps includes references to various cultural influences such as Waltz Clog, from English clog and Irish step-dancing, or the Cakewalk. Tap steps are also named from the anatomy used in execution such as heel or toe. In the incorporation of the tap dance into the syllabi for the Modern Stage Dance Branch of the ISTD the steps are only referenced by the anatomy (heel, toe), the number of sounds (single, double) or physical execution of the step (brush, shuffle, etc.). Individual instructors may refer to tap steps by American names but there is no indication of this practice in ISTD literature. No explanation is provided for the shift in terminology by Raye. The selection of steps based on anatomy or physical execution implies an attempt to present tap steps in a more accessible format for students unfamiliar with American geography or history. In removing the element of improvisation to music from tap pedagogy, Raye and other instructors sought to eliminate complications in their delivery of the dance form.

The assimilation of tap dance into a dance syllabus structure appeared an ideal solution to ensure that the dance form was delivered and performed to a professional standard as determined by a board of professional dance teachers. Tap dance pedagogy transcended improvisation and codified steps into a recognisable and measurable skill achieved

through examination. Uniformity of rhythm and steps allowed for a prescribed and neutral performance aesthetic that could be easily measured for examinations. Without improvisation in tap performance, the dance form became easily transferrable to audiences unfamiliar with African aesthetics. A similar process existed in the development of ragtime music in the early twentieth century. Dance scholar Danielle Robinson explains how European Americans exploring jazz dance practice created new interpretations of the music:

ragtime was regarded as 'black' because of its overt African American influences. When European Americans practiced such dancing, it created a cross-cultural bodily experience for those dancing and those watching. Despite being marked as black, it is important to note that ragtime dancing was, in fact, an amalgamation of African American and European American movement traditions. For those accustomed to the representations of blackness on minstrel stages and Europeanist couple dancing (most U.S. urban dwellers), ragtime would also be recognizable as a hybrid dance form. Its practice would have signalled a co-mingling of black and white cultures. (2010: 189)

Robinson refers to the reinterpretations of ragtime music by Europeans as a process of 'whitening' but also emphasises the hybridity of the dance as a result.³⁷ Focussing on tap performance instead of improvisation did not erase the African presence completely but rather emphasised the different approaches to tap practice as it travelled overseas. Gottschild (2001: 333) describes improvisation in the context of African performance aesthetics as 'the Africanist aesthetic can be termed an aesthetic of contrariety, while the European perspective seeks to remove conflict through efficient problem solving'. The implementation of tap dance within an examination framework is an example of how tap practice was adapted to aid English tap dancers unfamiliar with the practice of tap jams and improvised exchanges.

The absence of exploration in tap dancing left tap dancers in the twenty-first century such as Murray and Laniyan frustrated at the limited opportunities to improvise within a syllabus structure. Regular tap jams created a social space for individuals to learn about tap dance and develop their technique without the pressure to formally present their skills. Murray (2009) maintained the United Kingdom did not boast an extensive history of tap dance or many English practitioners to champion the art form. She claims that participation in the tap jams may facilitate individuals learning about the history of tap dance in the United States and its global development through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Summary

The development of tap practice in different cultural, social, and pedagogical contexts led to a separate evolution of the tap jam in England. Tap dance in England was introduced through theatrical productions and examinations, creating a perspective that focuses more on performance than the social and cultural processes of learning the dance form. Instruction from qualified dance teachers provided ‘refinement as a pathway towards enhancing one’s artistry, morality, and health. It was a means of improving one’s self and establishing one’s class’ (Robinson 2004: 190). The focus shifted from the informal sessions between mentors and young tap dancers in clubs to the mastery of tap vocabulary delivered by qualified professionals in a studio. With a pre-selected glossary of steps and short routines choreographed for examinations, there

was limited time for practitioners and students to reminisce and share experiences of how the dance was passed down through the generations. By removing the process of personal histories accompanying each tap step, the ‘complex intercultural fusions’ (Hill 2002: 2) were distilled into a limited representation of an American dance practice. The absence of anecdotal content accompanying tap steps contributed to how tap dance was perceived in England by the public as well as by students. The removal of cultural elements contributes to a ‘whitening’ of a dance and its culture, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004) discusses in the study and interpretation of Aboriginal tribes in Australia. She claims that whitening ‘establishes the limits of what can be known about the other through itself, disappearing beyond or behind the limits of this knowledge it creates’ (Moreton-Robinson 2004: 75). The transmission of tap dance to England resulted in a limited representation of the dance form and the steps learned without knowledge of the cultural history of the individual practitioners. Instead, tap dance became associated with polished, choreographed, and theatrical performances. *The New York Times* critic La Rocco (2006: 1) acknowledges that this created a new history for tap dance in England, quoting American tap dancer Hilberman: “‘Europe is not beholden to our cultural and racist history” Mr. Hilberman said, drawing parallels between the social history of tap and the social history of America’.

The introduction of the tap jam in England was a direct impact of English tap dancers witnessing first-hand the sites of cultural exchange in the jams of New York City. The cultural influences that contributed to the development of the tap jams in the United States did affect the implementation of tap jams in England. Due to limited engagement with the events, English tap dancers disseminated elements to bring back rather than

transfer the tap jams verbatim. The altered practices of the tap jams in England are analysed in detail in Chapter Four. In order to investigate how the tap dance communities in England integrate the tap jams into their social and performance activities, tap dance should be considered from a performance perspective as well as an academic context. Examining the tap jams, technique classes, and community-sponsored events from the perspective of how community members experience them requires a methodology that will allow for shifting roles of the researcher and performer.

Notes:

¹ Frank's (1990) collection of interviews with American tap dancers includes several instances of performers recalling how they learned steps from watching fellow performers or catching shows during breaks from their own performances. As an example Frank (1990: 41-42) includes an interview segment in which tap dancer Leonard Reed recalls learning tap dance steps from Travis Tucker in the all-black revue *Hits and Bits* in which he ended up impersonating Tucker. Hill (2002: 139-142) describes how the Nicholas Brothers would adapt their steps to match 'a thirty-two bar musical structure' of the large bands when working with Count Basie, Duke Ellington, or Cab Calloway.

² A full analysis of the structure and performance content of the tap jams in the Manchester and London tap communities is presented in Chapter Four.

³ In this chapter I consider the experiences of tap dancers such as Gregory Hines and his memories of training with older tap practitioners backstage at clubs such as the Apollo in New York City.

⁴ Knowles (2002: 38-54) explains that 'social dances' manifested as variations of traditional African dances performed by slaves on plantations during their free or social time.

⁵ Knowles (2002: 15-17) describes the origins of English clog dancing from Lancashire mill workers in the late eighteenth century. He outlines how the hard shoes or clogs worn by workers were first used to tap out the beat of shuttles at the looms. The tapping evolved into contests during breaks at the factories. He that what started out as workers striking the cobblestones with the hard shoes to stay warm became competitions to see which workers could perform the most complicated rhythms. Knowles does not provide solid evidence of the connection between the factory workers clogging and informal competitions or whether they are connected directly to the tap jams.

⁶ Anbinder (2001: 173-174) describes the Irish and English immigrants living in the Five Points District in New York in the streets and dance halls. Irish and English dancers participated in dance contests with African Americans.

⁷ The dance 'Jump Jim Crow' was based on a popular trend of white performers creating characters for their repertoire based on observations of African American workers. The historian Toll (1974: 28) describes how Thomas D. Rice originated the dance: 'saw an old Negro, his right shoulder deformed and drawn up high, his left leg gnarled with rheumatism, stiff and crooked at the knee, doing an odd-looking dance while singing: "Weel about and turnabout and do jus so;/Ebery time I weel about, I jump Jim Crow." Aware that any "peculiar" song or dance had great public appeal, Rice recognized this as excellent material for a stage act. He learned the song and dance, added new verses, "quickened and slightly

changed the air," made himself up to look like the original--even to wearing his clothes--and took to the stage. His new act created a public sensation and took him on a triumphant tour of major entertainment centers, including dancing "Jim Crow" in New York City in 1832 and in London in 1836. '

⁸ Hill (2010: 33) described cakewalking by African-American slaves as 'a parody of white mannerisms'. She explains how the dances catered to white slave owners' vanity and allowed slaves an outlet for mockery within the confines of song and dance. Buckland (2011: 151-52) discusses how the performance of the cakewalk required specific roles for dancers and audience that were determined by class.

⁹ Sammy Davis Jr. biographer Haygood (2003: 68) equates tap dancers learning to tap in vaudeville shows with 'something akin to getting a Harvard degree'. Formal tap technique classes were not available to many vaudeville performers due to their touring schedule and the cost of regular study. Tap dancers learned to tap dance by imitating and improvising steps from other performers.

¹⁰ Hill (2010: 76-80) explains 'vernacular' dances in these shows as originating from jazz and specialty dances. She provides examples of the Black Bottom, Foxtrot, and St. Louis Hop performed by tap dancers in these shows.

¹¹ Wayburn initially experimented with 'solider' numbers with chorus girls marching in time using simple steps as Cohen-Stratynier (1996: 16) explains, 'Wayburn recognized the advantage of integrating sound into the actual marching of the dancers, instead of adding it more conventionally through the percussion section of the orchestra'.

¹² Hill (2002: 102) described this pairing of tap dancers as the 'two-man rule'. African-American performers were restricted to performing in pairs and usually portrayed contrasting characters for comedic value. The focus on verbal banter and physical distinctions in performance required tap dancers to constantly innovate new steps to support their characters in their acts.

¹³ Hill (2010: 79) claims that 'hundreds' of tap steps were developed during the 1920s as tap dancers experimented in jam sessions. These steps helped tap soloists 'evolve onto a new echelon of visual and aural perfection' in their stage shows.

¹⁴ An example would be the late Bill Robinson. He was an American tap practitioner well-known for guarding his famous stair dance steps, a routine that could only be witnessed in his shows (Haskins 1998: 191).

¹⁵ Frank (1990: 46) explains that tap dancers became associated with a style of performance and were billed by the shows accordingly to draw an audience. She states, '[a]n act became known for one of these specific styles of tap dancing...they excelled specifically in one area, and the audiences loved them for it'.

¹⁶ Initially comprised of solo or duo specialty acts, large group numbers featuring tap dancers began to emerge as 'solider' routines grew in popularity during World War I (Stratynier 1996: 15-16).

¹⁷ Hill (2010: 96) refers to the film *Black and Tan* (1929) as a turning point for tap performance: 'it lifts up tap dancing from the stereotypical image of the shuffling darky to the highest expression of perfection: the precision class act'. The term 'class act' refers to the elegant and formal postures and precision rhythms of African American tap dancers that imitated white tap acts in minstrel and vaudeville shows.

¹⁸ Dance historian Barbara Stratynier (1996: 16) explains that the articulation of the sounds of individual steps was key in working with large numbers of dancers. Steps had to be simplified to ensure clarity of sounds. Hill (2010: 83) credits Wayburn with the designation of the four parts of the foot (heel, toe, ball, flat foot) to be used in the simple choreography. Limiting the surfaces of the foot making contact with the floor eliminates extraneous noise in the performance of the steps.

¹⁹ Jimmy Ormande (1933) created one of the earliest instructional books for tap dancers. The book features pictures of female tap dancers such as Ginger Rogers photographed demonstrating various tap steps.

²⁰ Knowles (1998: 28, 32, 35) explains how a combination might include common tap dance steps such as a time step, maxi ford, and buffalo.

²¹ A tap combination can be taught using phonetic descriptions to assist tap dancers in remembering the rhythm. A combination of shuffle, ball change, ball change, step stomp might sound like, 'Ba Da Dee Da Dee Da Bop Bam!'

²² Civil Rights historian Omi (1994: 19) describes the 1960s in the United States as, 'the civil rights movement was a drive for black integration and for the removal of any remaining forms of institutional/legal discrimination...The civil rights movement was trying to create for blacks the same conditions that white ethnics had found'. Young tap dancers in the 1960s did not want to perform racial stereotypes that would conflict with their goals to end discrimination against African Americans.

²³ Hill (2010: 51) writes how the chorus girls in *Ziegfeld Follies of 1914* were 'presented not as a tap dancing chorus but as a ranked corps of dancers...who made a spectacular display of tap and stepping as

one of many dance specialities, to provide a visual and aural contrast in the orchestration of the choreography'. Dodds (2009: 251-253) explores how Fred Astaire incorporated tap dance and other dance styles in popular films such as *Daddy Long Legs* (1955).

²⁴ Raye (1936: 1) described the precision of the execution of the tap steps and professionalism of the tap dancers in American studios. She hoped to emulate American practitioners by bringing a similar approach to tap dance to the ISTD.

²⁵ Organisations such as the Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing and the International Dance Teachers Association have examinations for dance styles such as ballet, modern, and tap.

²⁶ Dance historian Foulkes (2002: 21) writes how '[m]odern dancers utilized the spiritual traditions of Native Americans in developing a "rhythm of integration" and culled from African and African American dance traditions the free of the whole body for a "rhythm of disintegration"...echoed the kinetic principles underlying the rhythmic impulses of African-related dance'. These influences were present in the Denishawn approach exploring how rhythm could be embodied by dancers.

²⁷ *The Dance Journal*, now called *DANCE Magazine*, was first published in 1907 by the ISTD. It is the main publication of the ISTD and is sent out to members each quarter with information on examinations, training, competitions, and interviews with practitioners. Zelia Raye contributed to an article (uncredited) by Joan Davis, 'Teacher the Rudiments of Tap Dancing' in the December 1934 issue.

²⁸ Raye (1936: 2-3) cited Denishawn's classes as an influence in how to structure her classes for the syllabus. Denishawn maintained that 'discipline' was needed for dance and often included 'strenuous physical exercise' in his sessions to demonstrate the level of fitness required for dancers (Foulkes 2002: 83).

²⁹ Cornell is a Canadian tap dancer who trained primarily with American tap practitioners.

³⁰ Will Gaines was an American tap practitioner that moved to London in 1963 and later relocated to Leigh upon Sea. He remained in England until his death on 7 May 2014. I conducted an interview with him in October 2010 to discuss his role in the London tap community.

³¹ African-American practitioner William Henry Lane performed in England in 1848 as part of a musical revue (Stearns 1968: 46). Lane's performances progressed from early days of tap challenges and performances in the Five Points district of New York where he was exposed to performance practices of lower class Irish immigrants and freed African American slaves. Lane trained and frequently performed in the dance halls of the Five Points neighbourhood in New York City during the 1840s until he began to tour England in 1848. American historian Tyler Anbinder (2001:1) describes the area: 'the densely populated enclave was once renowned for jam-packed, filthy tenements, garbage-covered streets, prostitution, gambling, violence, drunkenness, and abject poverty. "No decent person walked through it".'

³² Minstrel shows were popular in England prior to Lane's performance and the shows usually featured groups, such as the Virginia Minstrels (Knowles 2002: 96). These shows focussed on 'presenting Southern African-American life as exotic and idealized' (Knowles 2002: 96). Lane's shows highlighted him as an individual performer without any reference to slavery or plantation life.

³³ Black music historians Rye and Green (1995: 93-94) write that although African American performers were present in various forms of entertainment in Britain during the early twentieth century, their contributions were not always documented: 'In the 1920s and 1930s hundreds of thousands of people in Britain danced to music played by black instrumentalists, watched shows with black dancers, were amused by black entertainers at parties and night clubs, purchased sheet music and played melodies created by black composers, and listened to performances by black people on phonograph discs. Stage shows imported from the United States played to packed houses in British theaters. The London and provincial press carried advertisements, reviews, comments, photographs, and interviews associated with these shows... Those who composed music, sang, danced, and played in bands and orchestras in theaters, dance halls, and nightspots all over Britain left a legacy, but it has not been documented as fully'.

³⁴ Thomas DeFrantz (2004: 21) describes how the trend of American modern dance audiences portrayed as predominantly white continued into the late twentieth century: 'The audience, too, for concert dance mirrored the readers of American literature, and, as Morrison reminds us, "until very recently, and regardless of the race of the author, the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white".'

³⁵ Biographer Haskins (1998) writes that Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson attained international recognition throughout his career.

³⁶ Hill (2010: 17) identifies the 'satiric traditions' of Irish story-telling and African American songs of derision as key contributing factors in early tap challenges.

³⁷ Australian writer Perkins (2004: 164) describes 'whitening' ethnic cultures as 'a political and cultural term that signifies status, power, and in the minds of some, character'. She quotes Richard Dyer (1997:

45), stating that '[w]hiteness as power is maintained by being unseen...[t]rue whiteness resides in the non-corporeal...[It] is the sign that makes white people visible as white, while simultaneously signifying the true character of white people, which is invisible'. African American historian McAllister (2011:10) writes that black performers would 'white up' as a process of 'whitening' black culture: '[u]nlike racial passers, stage Europeans and whiteface minstrels openly exploit the fissures and inconsistencies in American hierarchies...black artists have challenged cultural and racial assumptions by transferring supposed markers of whiteness, like grace and universal humanity, to black bodies'.

Chapter 3 Ethnographic Methodologies

This chapter discusses the methodologies and techniques applied throughout my ethnographic investigation of the tap communities in Manchester and London. I explore methodologies such as multi-sited ethnography, netnography, and software systems for data analysis. The chapter also presents methodological issues encountered during my research and the impact on the data collected from both fieldsites.

Designing the Ethnographic Study

Attendance of a performance by *Abouttime Tap Company* on 28th of October 2008 served as the initial reconnaissance for my fieldwork. The company members are involved in both the Manchester and London tap dance communities, including tap jam organisers Jess Murray (Manchester) and Junior Laniyan (London). The show featured choreographed rhythm tap group pieces, duets, and solos as well as group improvisation and improvised solos. The performance provided an introduction to the members of the two tap dance communities. At the end of the show, I was able to begin integrating into both tap dance communities by introducing myself to the tap dancers. Informal discussions with the performers after the show revealed that they frequently contributed to workshops and master classes in both Manchester and London. The collaboration

between community members provided confirmation that I needed to investigate more than one site for the fieldwork.

In my initial reconnaissance fieldnotes, I included detailed visual descriptions of how an individual generated rhythm in improvised tap performances of the *Abouttime* tap company. I felt that this approach alone was inadequate. In tap dance, the dancer generates sound through movement and this requires an additional dimension of study. As a researcher, I could not rely entirely on visual information produced in the performances alone. The emphasis on sound produced by the performer in tandem with the musicians generated another level of engagement and I needed to consider the connection between movement and music.

Labanotation can be used to record individual movements and their relationship with music as dance anthropologist Brenda Farnell writes:

When music or other rhythmic division controls the timing of action, the time axis of the staff can be divided up into bats and bars in a manner similar to musical notation. Spatial direction signs normally lengthen to indicate the time taken for performance, but they can also be given a standard length in action sign systems where absolute timing is not important. (2012: 49)

Farnell's examples of notated scores demonstrated the duration of the actions and how they are matched with the text, creating a document that moves beyond a record of the event. Capturing the movement and text in a more realistic depiction of flow of time appealed to my need to analyse how tap steps are matched to the music. Labanotation has been used to document tap dance and provides a guideline for the individual tap steps as tap practitioner Billie Mahoney claims:

Simplifying the basic symbols and concepts of the movement notation system of Labanotation, we are able to clarify timing of tap steps for the tap dance student. The center line of the three line staff divides right and left supports, which are indicated in the immediate columns on either side of the center line. A simple straight line indicates a step directly under the center of weight. An added arrow shows the direction of a step, forward or backward. These same indications when placed near the outer columns indicate non-supported leg gestures, or brushes forward and backward. (2001:1)

Mahoney's (2001: 3) Labanotation of a Triple Rhythm Time Step does demonstrate clarification of the timing for the tap step but no guidance is provided for how an individual may adapt the rhythm to their own interpretation. Her notation is descriptive and captures the physical elements of the step such as the direction of travel in space and which foot executes the movement. The score does not allow for a prescriptive documentation of the steps, as in dance ethnographer Andriy Nahachewsky's (1995: 5) notations of presentational dances: 'a comparison of a number of performances and...verbal descriptions of the dance from members of the tradition'. The improvised tap performances resembled the unique performances of male dancers in the Carpathian region, which folk dance scholar György Martin (1968: 62) describes as possessing an 'extraordinarily high degree of individual improvization'. These dances presented individual interpretations dependent on each male dancer but the solos follow a 'loose structure' (Martin 1968: 62) derived from couple and group dances. Unlike Nahachewsky's and Martin's examples, the individual tap improvisations were not composite performances and changed depending on each performer's musical and physical preferences for executing the tap steps.

Documenting individual improvised performances proved problematic as movement notation systems such as Labanotation could not completely capture the improvised rhythmic variations of participants. Choreomusical researcher Stephanie Jordan

(2000:78-79) maintains Labanotation's system of symbols provide 'an approximation of the moment of perceived impulse' but is limited in determining individual rhythmic subtleties of a step. I considered documenting tap steps utilising musical notation but this approach created additional difficulties for recording the tap jam performances. Musical scores could demonstrate the duration of the individual tap steps more accurately but did not account for how a tap dancer kinetically executes the step.¹ The physical interpretation of the step is not accounted for in a musical staff. Jordan explains:

a note or a chord begins with a sound impulse and lasts until the next or until sound gives way to silence. The issue is more problematic in dance. Music is built from discrete units. Units of sound and units of duration concur: sound impulses begin with both. This is not the case in dance, where impulses often do not occur at the beginning of a movement. Impulses can occur at the onset of a motion after stillness, but they can also occur within a continuum of motion (for example, within a swing) or at the end of a continuum of motion...it is the impulses still that determine our grasp of duration in dance...The precise timing of the moment is hard to establish in movement terms. (2000: 78-79)

Jordan's observations also highlight a particular difficulty in documenting tap steps using Labanotation. An individual interpretation of the impulse in a single tap step varies due to multiple factors such as tempo of the music, the style of tap shoe, or the mood of the performer during the improvisation.² The issue of duration is addressed by Mahoney within the Labanotation system through use of arrows on the support and leg gesture columns (Mahoney 2001: 1-2). Mahoney acknowledges that students may produce differentiations in the length of sound depending on how they count the step. Labanotation is applied in the structural analysis of dances, as seen in the collection of Adrienne Kaeppler and Elsie Dunin (2007), but does not capture how an individual determines the duration of a step in the moment of improvisation and does not provide

alternatives for individual exploration of timing. Some tap practitioners such as Bufalino (2004), Feldman (1994), and Gray (1998) employ a combination of musical notation and written description of tap steps. The notation in this literature functions primarily as examples of exercises to improve technique and sound generation. Bufalino, Feldman, and Gray's individual methods capture duration and accurate execution of accents but again do not provide any explanation of how to document an individual's variation of the steps.

The separate notation systems created difficulty in establishing a universal method for the documentation of tap steps. While notation systems may capture the individual tap steps they do not account for how an individual *selects* the steps during an improvisation. My notation would be an interpretation of what I witnessed at the tap jams and would not take into account how the improvised tap steps might be perceived by audience, musicians, or other community members, as dance scholar Judy Van Zile explains:

Most often, the translation is done by someone other than the dancer, which means a score represents an interpretation of movement. It is not 'raw data' in the same way that research information in the sciences is. In order to create a score, the researcher must see and understand the movement and make choices about how to describe it. (1999: 86)

Notating improvised tap performance would create a record of the tap steps but as seen and heard by myself in that moment. The performer could be responding to a different musical or physical cue than what I perceived. Without interviewing each individual extensively after every performance, I could not determine if a step was executed in response to the rhythm of the drums, piano, bass, or chosen for an emotional reaction to a personal event outside of the tap jams. Questioning individuals after improvisations

did not provide any clarity as participants could not accurately recall why they selected steps.³ I chose to rely on video recordings to document the performances at tap jams as it would capture the event without my interpretation or bias, ensuring that my data would be as 'raw' as possible. The videos also generated an accessible medium to use during the individual case studies that would allow individuals to view their improvised performances for discussion.

Thirty months were allocated for fieldwork in both Manchester and London. The time frame was influenced by the schedule of activities in the two communities. Tap jams occurred monthly or termly and the breaks between events required me to extend my fieldwork to almost three years. In order to fully appreciate the experience of the community members I attended multiple tap jams, classes and workshops each year. My repeated attendance reflected how participants engaged in their own tap practice, returning to the tap jams every month or term to continue exploring tap improvisation.

Participant observation was the primary technique used in my fieldwork. Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt (2011: ix) describe participant observation as, 'reacting to and interacting with others in the events and situations that unfold... At the same time, investigators are bringing their own unique background and experience to the situation'. Dance scholar Deidre Sklar (2000: 71) maintains, '[t]here is no other way to approach the felt dimensions of movement experience than through the researcher's own body'. In order for me to interpret the embodied sound and movement knowledge of participants I needed to turn my gaze inwards to question my own experiences during my fieldwork. I considered Helena Wulff's definition of 'participant observer':

we negotiate what we see with what we know, watching is structured by knowledge and belief. The reasons for watching as well as the ways of watching are also prominent aspects of how knowledge comes about through observation in the field. (2008: 76)

Applying participant/observer techniques to embodied practice is seen in studies such as Sara Delamont and Neil Stephens' (2008) work on *capoeira*. Delamont and Stephens utilised a combined approach with Delamont primarily observing sessions and Stephens engaging in the classes. The two-part investigation enabled the ethnographers to discuss changes in embodiment creating a dialogic interpretation of data. Steven Wainwright's *et al* (2007) investigation into professional ballet companies included observation and participation in classes but also focussed on extensive interviews with the dancers. These academics used participation/observation of the dance forms to understand how individuals engaged with habitus as a cultural practice. While this approach initially appealed to my desire to explore how participants created their own interpretation of tap practice, I felt the focus on habitus within an institution as in Wainwright's *et al* (2006) study or as part of a diaspora in Delamont and Stephens (2008) did not accord with my objectives.

Dance scholar Dena Davida (2011) advocates an embodied approach in participation/observation in her collection of ethnographies on art world dance. Her use of embodied ethnography focusses on how 'the attributes of a dance practice are seen as embodied indicators of social and religious practice and belief' (Davida 2011: 12). The concept of understanding movement as an indication of social practice was a more appropriate model for my study, as the participants perceived the tap jams as a social space for their dance practice. Dance ethnographer Ann David also applied embodied

observations and participation in her investigations of Gujarati dance in Leicester, claiming that

a more concentrated, and more meaningful level of engagement takes place...As a trained dancer, it is straightforward to copy the physical steps, and to perform the improvised and more elaborate forms as they emerge, but the interior quality is of a different order. Experiencing and embodying the movement brings an inner understanding through multi-layered perceptions. (2014: 26)

In order to examine how a tap dancer learns to improvise and creates an identity, I needed to experience how participants developed rhythmic preferences as well as movement patterns.

Approaching my investigation as a researcher with an embodied knowledge of tap dance required me to scrutinise recognisable practices and constantly re-evaluate my familiarity with the dance form. As a tap dancer trained in the United States, I possess knowledge of tap practice but I needed to maintain awareness of my own practice as a foundation for comparison. Dance researcher Sally Ann Ness explains that researchers must temper their own practice with the interpretation of data to fully understand that

embodied practice can be seen to produce different understandings of the cultural aspect of human body movement that is manifest in dance. “Culture” as revealed through dance is cast, not as a simple present, perfect, and definite reality, but in terms of a present understood in relation to both past oppositions and instances, and to future temporal realities and continuities. (2004: 138)

Inclusion of reflexivity within my research was essential to comprehend both rhythmic and physical choices of the dancer within the wider context of engaging in the tap dance communities. As Sklar (1991: 8) states, ‘[t]he writer’s cultural knowledge is as much a part of the relationship between researcher and dancer as the dancer’s’. My own

knowledge and performance experience enabled me to capture the process of participants learning and engaging in tap practice more effectively. Jonathan Skinner (2010: 124) quotes Crosby (1997) and discusses how his experiences in salsa dance classes and performance enabled him to write about dance more holistically: ‘these dance descriptions come from the viewpoint of the participant rather than any observer, “they emphasize the quality of being inside the experience as opposed to visual shape”’. When drawing upon my embodied knowledge of tap, I had to shift my awareness from focussing strictly on my past training. I needed to recognise how the pedagogy of the two tap communities influenced my improvisations in classes and performances at the tap jams. As Helen Thomas writes:

[e]thnographic descriptions of dance should be situated within the historical context in which they are performed, and information concerning the cultural context, the social values, systems of beliefs, symbolic codes and so on is crucial to the understanding of the dance. (2003: 82)

In my fieldwork I had to consider the historical context of tap dance as practised in the two tap communities: many community members learned to tap dance in an environment that was not inclusive of a detailed American tap history. I analyse the impact of these alternative historical and cultural contexts in Chapters Four and Five.

As an ethnographer I investigated the two communities from an ‘outsider’ perspective, despite entering the fieldsites as an ‘insider’ with knowledge of tap dance. Including reflexive practice of my own experiences in the tap technique classes and tap jams also facilitated my transition into the two tap communities. Initial observations at tap jams in London were conducted from vantage points that allowed visual access to the entire room.⁴ As the investigation progressed, more participation was required to determine

more fully the experience of community members in both Manchester and London. My transitions between observer and participant were defined by shifting my physical presence in each fieldsite. Individuals wishing to improvise at the tap jams gather closer to the stage in preparation to be called to perform. Over the thirty month period I moved closer to the stage as I observed the improvised performances and participated in the jams. Familiarity with community members led to invitations to sit on stage or in the backstage area with the organisers of the tap jams. The progression from passive observer to active performer revealed multiple perspectives on how community members experience the tap jam.⁵ Immersing myself in improvised performances at the tap jams allowed me to act as an ‘observing participant’ (Daniel 1995: 22) and understand how the community members perceived each other’s performances. Exploring the ‘performed expressions’ of the participants (Daniel 1995: 22) as a performer myself revealed data such as how individuals interpret rhythms and translated these sounds into steps reflective of their own personalities. Simply observing the performances would not have yielded the same depth of understanding, as Swedish folklorist Owe Ronström states:

‘[o]ne problem lies in the discrepancies between insiders’ and outsiders’ perspectives: the “emic” and the “etic”. The cognizance of the community being investigated is seldom the same as that of the newcomer from the outside’. (1999: 134)

Interviews with individuals in the Manchester and London communities supplemented observations in the field. Interviews were semi-structured from a list of questions that were adapted to each individual. This approach allowed me to expand on experiences

that I witnessed as a member of the community. Wulff claims the interview is an important link to understand the context of data gathered in the field:

I connect participant observation and interviews: a piece of information I first get through participant observation, I then check during the interview and vice versa; something I learned in an interview, I look for during participant observation in order to confirm and contextualise it. (2012: 167-168)

To further my understanding of the role that the tap communities played in a participant's development, the interviews were followed up by individual case studies. The case studies were individual meetings with members of both communities in which participants watched filmed footage of tap jams and were asked a series of questions. While I did not pursue Pierre Vermersch's (1994) explication technique as used by dance anthropologists Anne Cazemajou (2011, 2012) or Georgiana Gore (2006, 2012), I did find the answers elicited responses from the participants that revealed how they perceived their individual performance.⁶ I followed this with an informal discussion of their progress as a tap dancer. The results of the case studies highlighted a gap in my understanding of the ISTD tap training which the participants had received. In order to access the missing information I conducted further archival research at the ISTD Library in London.

In addition to interviews and case studies, two questionnaires for each community were created to capture a broader picture of the participants. The questionnaires enquired about age, gender, ethnicity, first encounters with tap dance, why the individual joined the community and what activities they participated in within the community. I encountered difficulties during the distribution of the questionnaires due to the venues at each fieldsite. The tap jams were held at small jazz bars which were crowded and

also noisy as a result of the live music. These conditions made it difficult to approach individuals with the questionnaires and participants found it hard to concentrate on answering the questions in such a loud environment. This led me to seek alternative methods of collecting information from participants such as online questionnaires and interviews conducted via email and social networking sites.

The physical location of two distinct tap dance communities in separate cities and the limited availability of community members hindered scheduling the most efficient means to interview the participants. It was not possible for me to meet every individual in the two communities. This contributed to initial gaps in data as the perspective of key individuals could not be examined until the participants were available to meet. These individuals directed me to social networking sites such as Facebook as an alternative means to engage in discussions at a more convenient time. While it is essential to include a record of encounters with participants, I questioned how I would place the online interactions with community members with data gathered in physical fieldsites. Dana Walker addresses this very issue in her ethnographic study of city-specific discussion forums:

[q]ualitative researchers interested in digitally-located social and cultural practices have struggled with ways in which to design studies that can account for the digital aspect of cultural practices while also taking into account that those digital practices do not exist as separate (or separable in terms of research) from other social and cultural practices. (2010: 23)

The participants valued conversations generated on the social network websites as part of their daily interactions with other tap community members and did not view these conversations as separate to physical discussions.

Incorporating online conversations into my fieldwork generated complications in determining the legitimacy of information presented in digital environments.

Individuals potentially behaved differently in virtual spaces and I had to consider how to interpret this data. Sociologist Christine Hine (2007: 453) advocates a multi-sited approach to fieldwork when including data from digital sources, stressing a need for ethnographers to focus instead on ‘dialogue and the emergence of negotiated solutions’. I approached the social networking websites as an extension of my physical fieldsites, engaging in the online discussions as another form of participant observation. Angela Garcia *et al* describes this technique as ‘participant experiencer’:

in the online support group there is no opportunity to directly observe the other members of the group; the researcher can, however, experience what it is like to participate in the group by reading and posting messages to the group. (2009: 58)

The digital interactions with tap community members reflected the ‘mediated encounters’ in other dance ethnographies such as dance scholar Mary Fogarty’s (2012: 449) study of b-boy/b-girl groups and provided another layer for my data analysis. Multi-sited ethnography and netnography are discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

The management of my data and the organisation of fieldnotes required a solution that allowed me to analyse information obtained from both physical and virtual interactions with participants. In the following sections I present detailed descriptions of the techniques I utilised throughout my fieldwork and how the methodological issues affected the data and my experiences.

Participant observation

During my investigations from January 2009 until June 2011, I focussed on participation in tap classes led by Jess Murray at both Sunshine Studios and Band on the Wall in Manchester. The classes formed the nexus of the Manchester tap community and regular attendees became key informants for my fieldwork. Classes at 'Beginner' and 'Intermediate/Advanced' levels were offered each term. No examination process was required before joining in the next level of tap classes. I participated in the 'Beginner' class from January until March in 2009 in order to gain insight into how community members learned basic tap vocabulary and improvisation skills. I attended the 'Intermediate/Advanced' classes during three intermittent semesters from April 2009 until June 2010 to understand how participants progressed in their tap technique and improvisation skills. Individuals are encouraged by the class instructors to proceed to a higher level of class at their own discretion.⁷ I began attending the 'Intermediate/Advanced' sessions due to Murray's recommendation that I would be able to follow the progress of individuals involved from the very first Manchester tap jam.

From April to June 2010 I participated in tap classes at Pineapple Dance Studios in London which were taught by Junior Laniyan. I attended fewer tap technique classes in London owing to my limited funding for travel. Laniyan's classes were selected as they are the classes that form the nucleus of the London tap dance community and are still

attended by community members at present. The classes featured rhythm tap and improvised combinations of steps. During this period, I also joined in classes taught by Derek Hartley at Pineapple Dance Studios. Hartley's classes emphasised learning a weekly taught routine by the instructor. These sessions served as a sample of the type of tap classes available to individuals outside of the tap community in London. Establishing that Hartley's classes are categorised outside of the community would not have been possible without my participation in his sessions alongside of Laniyan's. I needed to understand the context and content of each class. As anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler maintains:

[i]n participant observation important elements include observing movement content and its contexts, taking part by learning the movements...and asking questions about the movement and its contexts. (1999: 20)

Identifying differences in tap technique classes at Pineapple assisted in differentiating the contexts in which individuals in London engaged in tap practice. Comparing the content of participation in each tap technique class also contributed to an understanding of why tap community members sought out Laniyan's classes instead of Hartley's.⁸

Initially I did not reveal my level of experience to the Manchester or London tap community members. As a beginner level tap dancer I believed I could act as a covert participant/observer and be more approachable to tap community members. At the first tap jam in London I introduced myself as an individual conducting some research into tap dance to explain why I was only watching the performances and taking notes. I did not wish to create any bias due to my previous training and performance experience that might influence the responses of participants in interviews or case studies.

During the early fieldwork in Manchester and London I stayed at the back of the studio during technique classes and tried to view each class as if I was learning the tap steps for the first time. I also wanted to experience how participants learned how to tap dance without any knowledge of the dance form. As the classes progressed, I actually grew frustrated with my own technique and felt it regressed slightly. I realised that I was disregarding my own embodied knowledge and that I would have to disclose my experience to the Manchester community members to explain my disgruntlement in classes. My identity as an American tap dancer did not hinder the relationships I developed with the community members but served as link to the participants' interest in tap dance. As my time with the community progressed, I shared my experiences of improvised tap performances during the classes and in social gatherings, as this was a common practice for the community members. A few individuals in the two communities were also working towards completion on Masters and Doctorate degrees.⁹ These individuals became a form of additional academic and moral support in my research.

As an American tap practitioner, my experience of learning the dance form did lead to initial complications in interpreting data from fieldwork. My own tap practice in the United States had exposed me to the social and cultural history of the dance form as I learned the steps. Initially, I interpreted community members mentioning American tap practitioners in technique classes as a parallel to my own experiences. My embodied knowledge of the dance form had inaccurately led me to assume that community members gained significant cultural knowledge of the dance form simply by learning

the steps. My initial error required me to re-examine all data and contemplate how information about the dance form is delivered in an educational context as well as a cultural context within the English tap communities.

The dual tasks of witnessing the participants learning to improvise and sharing their experiences in classes added another dimension to my role as an ethnographer. The definitions of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ as used in ethnographic fieldwork began to shift for me. Dance scholar Joan Frosch describes the dual role of ‘insider/outsider’ in ethnography as

a true participant and observer, the researcher in the field takes on simultaneous and sometimes contradictory roles. In the course of a year in the field, the researcher may be insider and outsider, friend and stranger, educated researcher and uninformed novice, cultural “appreciator” and cultural illiterate, inquisitive guest and persistent pest, respected person and hopeless clown. Traveling across a diverse range of perspectives can prove to be a genuinely valuable (if, at times, unsettling) strategy, allowing the researcher to see and understand from multiple points of view. (1999: 264-265)

Frosch identifies the contradictory roles of an ethnographer and highlights how an individual may experience ‘culture’ during the course of an investigation. How I engaged with the ‘culture’ of learning how to improvise at community activities re-defined the role of ‘insider/outsider’ during my fieldwork. My ‘insider’ knowledge of tap dance informed my improvised performances in the two communities. I performed as professional tap practitioner for many years and had more experience improvising to live music than most community members. My tap pedagogy included improvisation from a very early age and exploring new steps and rhythms was encouraged in my tap classes. I spent hours watching footage of past practitioners, attending performances and tap jams. I was an ‘outsider’ in the sense that I was not an original community

member and I was an American living in England. During the investigation, I found myself as an ‘outsider’ to tap practice for the first time in my career. I had no experience of the syllabus method that many community members engaged with in their initial tap training, despite my extensive performance experience in tap dance.

The shifting of the parameters of ‘insider/outsider’ in my ethnographic study impacted on how I interpreted the improvised practice and performance of the community members. Visually comparing the performance styles to American tap practitioners or examining the vocabulary of community members did not allow me to fully appreciate differences in execution between the individual participants. I had to use my experience as a tap practitioner to understand how the community members learned to improvise and what meaning that held for each participant. Sklar explains that

ethnographers rely on personal movement experiences, not so much to facilitate description of particular steps or choreographies, as to understand the way sensation itself is organized, in the dancing certainly, and also, in Ness’s words, as “latent symbolism” of social action...treat movement as emergent, felt experience that works conceptually and metaphorically in relation to larger patterns of social meaning. (2000: 70-71)

I could not view the tap jams and classes as merely an extension of American tap practice. I needed to understand how the community members engaged with the dance form outside of the tap jams and studios.

In addition to participating in regular weekly classes in Manchester, I also attended additional community events. I joined two master classes taught by practitioners outside of the community, Canadian Heather Cornell and Austrian Max Pollak. These master classes focussed on the professional practice of the individual tap dancer and

brief discussions of their own performance career. My participation in the master classes ensured that I was exposed to how community members responded to changes in tap pedagogy and new approaches to improvisation techniques. A film screening was also offered as part of 'Black History Month' in October 2010.¹⁰ The documentaries *No Maps on My Taps* (1979) and *About Tap* (1985) were presented to members of the community. Heather Cornell and Jess Murray facilitated a discussion of the films with community members. The history of tap is not directly addressed in the technique classes or the tap jams. The screening was offered as an additional community event but has not become an annual activity for members. I attended this event to observe how members of the Manchester tap community engaged with the history of the dance form.

From October 2009 to February 2011, I also participated in master classes and workshops in London from practitioners outside of the community. Lisa LaTouche (The United States of America/Canada), Heather Cornell (Canada), and Roxanne Butterfly (Spain) were brought in by the London Tap Jam organisers to deliver workshops. The London tap dance community occasionally advertised these workshops as part of a celebration of the anniversary of the tap jam. Unlike the Manchester community, London tap dance community members organised events to showcase the 'birthday' of the tap jam. Participating in the workshops allowed me to establish differences in the tap practice of the two tap communities, such as how participants engaged with and responded to different styles of teaching.¹¹

I attended two monthly events in the London tap community in April and May 2010 called the Hoofers Lounge. The event was an informal workshop held in a practice room at Pleasant Theatre in London. London community members were invited to improvise to live music as they would at a tap jam but without an audience present. I improvised with the musicians and other community members and witnessed the participants learning to interact with musicians outside of a tap jam setting. The observations from the Hoofers Lounge furthered my understanding of how participants developed their improvisation skills and musicality through immediate feedback from the musicians and each other.

During June 2011, I participated in classes at Dance Xchange in Birmingham. The classes were attended by individuals local to Birmingham, eleven individuals all white-British and ranging in age from twenty-five to forty-five years. The content of the classes featured learning steps from the glossary of the IDTA syllabus and were delivered through physical demonstration by the instructor. The classes also included learning choreography for two routines to be presented as part of an annual recital for Dance Xchange. I was unable to arrange interviews with participants in the Birmingham syllabus classes due to time constraints of the individuals. I engaged in informal conversations with two female and one male participant before the classes and discovered that they did not attend or were unaware of the London or Manchester tap jams. An individual interview with the instructor of the Birmingham tap technique classes confirmed the content of the classes was the syllabus for the IDTA.

Engaging with tap practice separate from the two fieldsites created a sample of tap dance available to individuals in England who did not participate in the tap jams. The inclusion of the Dance Xchange classes in my fieldwork served to supplement my understanding of the tap syllabus training many participants received prior to their involvement in the two tap communities. While I was unable to engage in the full examination process of either the ISTD or IDTA, the tap classes in Birmingham offered insight into movement material and pedagogical techniques used as part of the syllabus framework.

Between January 2009 and June 2011, nine tap jams in London and five in Manchester were included in the participant observations. The tap jams occur on the last Sunday of every month in the London communities, except in December.¹² The tap jams occur once a school term in Manchester and dates are dependent on venue and musician availability. Live music by either a jazz trio or quartet, with occasional special appearances by singers or additional musicians, are features of each event. Initially the tap jams in both fieldsites were only observed to establish patterns in structure and content of the events. I observed the tap jam in Manchester in March 2009 and two tap jams in London in January 2009 and February 2009. Further into the fieldwork I began to participate actively in the tap jams in both Manchester and London to gain an understanding of the performance experience available to the community members. As the fieldwork continued I would occasionally decline to perform at the tap jams to observe and confirm any changes in structure and content.

Participating in and observing the tap technique classes, master classes, workshops, and tap jams addressed the issue of how to determine differences in tap practice and performance in England. In conducting the participant observation techniques in both fieldsites I managed to document and analyse the relationships of individuals as they performed in events in both tap communities.

Multi-sited Ethnography

My participation and observations of the two communities revealed that although they were geographically separate they shared an interest in learning tap improvisation techniques. Studies such as Helena Wulff's (1998) investigation into ballet companies in North America and Europe provided a model for an ethnography conducted over multiple locations, although Wulff examined professional dancers within a company structure. Travelling between two fieldsites reflected Wulff's (2007) 'yo-yo fieldwork' on Irish dance but my immersion in each fieldsite varied and was not always of equal time period in each city. Wulff (2007: 144) further notes that, '[t]he prerequisite for a yo-yo fieldwork is obviously that it is relatively easy and cheap to get to the field, and above all that the fieldworker is able to arrange life and work at home in a way that makes it possible to go away now and then, almost in a commuting manner'. Due to my very limited funding, it was not always financially possible to travel easily between the two cities. Dance anthropologist Yvonne Daniel's (2005) study on movement in African religions included multiple locations and demonstrated how dance practice can

be studied across several fieldsites. I re-evaluated my definition of fieldsite and selected a multi-sited approach to the ethnographic study. Social anthropologist Mark-Anthony Falzon (2009: 99) describes multi-sited ethnography as ‘the possibility...to interrogate the “site” of research, not as pre-constituted dimension of social inquiry, but as relational process and methodological device’. My study required me to examine the communities for the processes beyond tap performance that connected individuals in both cities, considering how individuals experienced the social process of belonging, as Mette Louise Berg and Nando Sigona explain:

[t]here is therefore a need for methods which avoid falling into the assumption that scales of belonging are necessarily nested neatly within each other, or that local dynamics are cut off from connections, dynamics and social relations that extend beyond or transgress geographic scales. (2013: 354)

In the two tap communities, key individuals acted as a central point of communication between all members.¹³ These individuals are responsible for organising events and passing information on to members in addition to functioning as an initial point of contact for new participants. Both Manchester and London tap dance communities advocate events held within the other community and encourage participants to perform at the different tap jams. Each fieldsite is identified by its location but members are not confined to either London or Manchester to participate in community sponsored events. Manchester community members travel to London for tap jams and master classes and members of the London tap dance communities attend Manchester tap jams and film screenings. I applied Falzon’s multi-sited approach as examining the two communities as individual social units did not take into consideration the mobility of individuals.¹⁴ Falzon (2009: 121) emphasises George Marcus’s discussion in analysing community and individual identities in multiple sites:

Marcus, for instance, argues that activities and identities are “constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts, or places, and ethnography must be strategically conceived to represent this sort of multiplicity”. (1989: 25)

The tap jams were analysed not only to identify any alterations in structure and content between the two communities but also to observe how participants formed relationships on and off the stage. Additionally, including both London and Manchester as fieldsites provided me with the opportunity to understand how community members created identities not only in performance but within and beyond their own geographical tap community.

Selecting multiple fieldsites raised issues of how to approach two distinct but inter-linked communities. Individuals from the separate fieldsites often participated in community sponsored-activities in both Manchester and London, presenting the problem of how to track their interactions between sites. Connections between individuals were discussed by participants as much as the physical practice of participating in tap dance at classes, workshops, and tap jams. These connections manifested as social friendships in both physical and virtual spaces, such as online social networking websites. The relationships between individuals in both cities were valued by community members as an integral element of their tap practice. The inclusion of both fieldsites in the investigation allowed for following the progress of individuals as they engaged in community activities regardless of location.

Netnography

Questionnaires were distributed during two tap jams in London and the Manchester tap jam in October 2010. The questionnaires were designed in a very basic format with tick box selections for participants for age range, gender, and nationality.¹⁵ Participants were asked questions about their first experiences of tap dance and what activities they participated in within the community.¹⁶ The questionnaires also included open-ended questions such as what appealed to the participants about attending the tap jams. The rationale of including the questionnaires in the fieldwork was quickly to establish a sample of people attending the tap jams and to determine any patterns in gender, age, nationality, or tap dance experience. The locations of the tap jams presented difficulties for distributing the questionnaires. Despite the informality of each event, approaching individuals who were watching the improvised tap dance and listening to the live music proved problematic. Requesting individuals to fill out the questionnaires in their own time to return later did not yield a sufficient response as many participants forgot to send on the questionnaires, despite repeated requests via email. As I did not live in either fieldsite, it was difficult to meet up with participants to retrieve the questionnaires in person. A more effective solution to distributing questionnaires and scheduling interviews was required.

Residing in a city outside of either fieldsite also raised issues of how I could engage in prolonged contact with the participants. Data from social networking sites provided

additional insight as to how participants valued their engagement in the tap communities. Community members would announce tap jams or post videos of improvised performances on their personal Facebook pages which could be accessed by non-community members.¹⁷ Frequent requests to contact community members via digital media such as email, instant chat, and social networking sites appeared to be a solution in ensuring contact but raised concerns of validity. I had to consider how conversations generated in digital environments may impact the context and content: participants may alter their behaviour or answers depending on whether they occupied a physical or virtual location. Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000: 4) refer to this as ‘virtuality’, stating that social media can constitute a place that is separate from reality of a physical social life. Falzon (2009: 110) argues that the location and the situations within the fieldsite can be socially constructed even if they are detached from an emplaced lived experience.

I considered social networking sites as an alternative to face to face communication. I realised that I could apply Falzon’s multi-sited methods in a digital environment in which

[t]he field applies participant observation and the traditional notion of the field beyond face-to-face interactions to social relations that are mediated electronically...In doing so, it tries to create virtual counterparts to ethnographic concepts and aims to change notions of fieldsites as localized space into an understanding of the fieldsite as a network of interlinked encounters. (2009: 129)

Interacting with participants online became a regular occurrence in the field as individuals revealed social networking sites as part of their daily and tap community

activities. The online interactions with community members could not be discarded as

Martyn Hammersly claims:

[w]e need to remember here that, with the availability of mobile phones and portable computers, electronic virtuality is now embedded within actuality in a more dispersed and active way than ever before. Moreover, the cultures that ordinary ethnography studies are also 'virtual', in a certain sense: they are not objects that we can see or touch. (2006: 8)

Online interactions between members of the two communities produced meanings that must be interpreted within the social constructs of both physical and digital spheres as Hine (2000: 8) states: '[e]thnography can therefore be used to develop an enriched sense of the meanings of the technology and the cultures which enable it and are enabled by it'. Falzon (2009: 5) champions a multi-sited approach as essential in comprehending the complexities of various social structures.¹⁸ Investigating how members of a dance community engage in dance practice in a digital environment may reveal insights unavailable to the researcher in through observations and participation in physical settings. Falzon equates the relationships generated among community members in multiple fieldsites to distributed knowledge systems, stating that

ethnographic subjects need to be accounted for as nodes in distributed knowledge systems. Each has her own specificity; each subject is a tangle of a particular set of forces. So there is "culture" in the trans-individual sense, but it settles into different subjects in different ways. (2009: 189)

Falzon's comparison creates a potential framework to utilise in my investigation:

viewing each community as a 'node' or collection of knowledge of the individuals. The collected knowledge refers to the individual performance styles and embodied rhythms belonging to community members. Falzon's concept of a 'node' also reflects Mark

Slobin's (1993: 98) affinity groups. The diversity of the participants did not impede on their ability to share their knowledge of tap practice, rather it enhanced the combined information available to the community. Falzon (2009: 188) cautions that his perspective is still speculative and could potentially raise even more questions as studying only the collective knowledge of the community may disregard the culture associated with the ethnographic subjects.¹⁹ Falzon clarifies that considering culture in the context of the collective knowledge of individuals is another interpretation of how the ethnographer could perceive information in the field:

[ethnographers] tend to find themselves in the middle of distributed knowledge systems, which is the way that other cultures manifestly present themselves these days anyhow. These are not the contexts of culture in villages and communities, etc. – but the form that culture takes so that even if you are not studying experts first, or as such, and are working in villages, you are also operating in distributed knowledge systems which are the challenge of fieldwork to figure out and operate within. (2009: 189)

Falzon's perspectives challenge the traditional ideals of what forms a culture and how it is investigated in ethnographic fieldwork. The concepts of 'community' and 'culture' are no longer strictly defined by a geographical location. Falzon (2009: 5) argues that multi-sited ethnography is not defined by the quantity of fieldsites but rather the layers of engagement within a selected community. My choice to follow the essence of multi-sited ethnography and its methods of following individuals between the selected cities was employed in combination with the key practice of participant observation of more traditional ethnography.²⁰

Participating in the online exchanges of community members did prove beneficial as it was easier to reach a larger number of participants than approaching them in noisy jazz clubs. In my search for sources to use as guidelines in my digital fieldsites, I discovered

that investigations utilising social networking sites for dance ethnography are limited and rely on disciplines such as communication studies or sociology.²¹ Literature such as that by Hines (2000) predates social networking sites such as Facebook, which was launched to students in 2004 and widely in use by the general public in 2006. I decided to follow social media scholar Robert Kozinets' approach of 'netnography':

[r]esearchers may benefit by adopting the approach of netnography, a form of ethnographic research adapted to the unique contingencies of various types of computer-mediated social interaction. Using a common understanding and a common set of standards for such studies will confer stability, consistency, and legitimacy. (2010: 20)

The social elements of belonging to a tap community extended into the Facebook website as individuals communicated with each other outside of the community-sponsored activities. I analyse the role of social media networking sites as an act of belonging in more detail in Chapter Five.

My decision to include online participation and observation of tap community activities required clear parameters for how I would obtain and interpret this source of data.

Potential difficulties in maintaining social network activities as part of the ethnographic fieldwork were time constraints and access. It was impossible for me to capture the online activity in real time of every single informant over the entire fieldwork period as extensive time would be required to observe Facebook interactions. A complete picture of the digital activities of all participants could not be generated. I choose to limit my screen captures of Facebook activity to twice a day over eighteen months. Determining which online activities are considered evidence of culture in a digital environment proved difficult. Some individuals were involved in a variety of social organisations or processes that were featured in tandem with their tap community activities on a

Facebook profile. I made the choice to examine only online references to the tap community and tap dance in order to avoid convolution of data. The weekly, and sometimes daily, posts of the community members suggested the use of Facebook generated an additional resource of tap community 'cultural activity' to supplement data obtained in the physical fieldsites. Kozinets (2010: 37) states that, '[o]nline communities are widespread phenomena, and their norms and rituals are shaped by the practices of cyberculture and those of the general cultural groups using them'. Contact time with many participants was limited and social networking sites permitted access to aspects of their lives that I may not be able to see in the prescribed time in an interview. All the information on Facebook is public, so I accessed the same information as anyone else invited to join the individual's network of social contacts. Individuals in both fieldsites gave consent for their contributions on Facebook to be used in this research.

Both the Manchester and London tap dance communities have a designated Facebook 'group' page.²² Many individuals within the community utilise these sites as their primary mode of communication between one another, sending messages to each other's inbox, engaging in instant chat sessions, or commenting on each other's status updates. This range of communication methods enables information such as class times, meetings, and events easily accessible to all community members who have joined the site. These sites also allow individuals to post photos, videos, and links. Facebook allows users to post comments on any of these applications, and often this generated an online discussion between members of the community. The inclusion of online interactions between community members revealed how participants in the two

separate fieldsites maintained contact with one another. Participants in both communities frequently posted html hyperlinks to the Youtube.com website featuring tap dance practitioners performing in films or live performances. Individuals commented on the shared video clips and discussions of steps. This facilitated another means for individuals to become exposed to a broader tap movement vocabulary. The option of commenting on posts or 'updates' created by individuals of the community enabled me to comment back and was another option to instigate discussion among community members.²³ The limitation of engaging with the participants in this format was that I had no control over 'outside' participants that did not belong to the tap communities, such as family members, as anyone belonging to a member's list of contacts could comment on the discussions. This, however, did not occur at any time in the fieldwork.

Through Facebook I approached individuals as I would in the field to gain permission to speak to them and utilise their thoughts on the community. This was done through sending a 'friend request'.²⁴ Online interactions with community members also facilitated further communications. Facebook 'chats' often led to face to face interviews or messages to answer further questions about a member's involvement in the community and its activities.²⁵ Two community members and one visiting practitioner requested interviews through Skype due to availability and complications with transportation.²⁶ Kozinets proposes that computer-mediated interviews provide the researcher with insights to how participants might interact with other individuals in their online social groups as

[c]onducting an interview through your computer means that your communications are going to be shaped by the medium you use. Adaptation means that cultural communications are already adapted to particular online media. (2010: 111)

The adaptation to the online interview from a face-to-face format required little adjustments as it was a medium which both the participants and I felt comfortable using. The software enabled the participants and myself to see one another with the video chat option as I conducted the interview; facial expressions, vocal inflections, and hand gestures were witnessed as they would be in a physical setting. Utilising the Skype software did not impact on the data generated from the interviews.

Computer-mediated interviews inspired me to create alternative methods to gather data in a digital environment. Online questionnaires were circulated as they were in the field, however an added benefit was that individuals could see each other's responses, if they choose to do so, and my intention was to generate additional discussion. The online comments disclosed information that I would not have accessed with traditional methods.²⁷ In an attempt to facilitate further online discussion in a more controlled digital environment, two separate wikis were created with 'tikiwiki' software and Google applications from March 2010 until May 2010. The function of a wiki allows individuals to build the content of the webpage by contributing information they find relevant to the topic. My rationale was to create the potential for alternative online interaction with participants 'in which culture members and a set of researchers use the online wiki form to jointly describe, portray, and understand a culture' (Kozinets 2010: 169). The intention was to eliminate the need for a constant online presence on social networking sites as the administrative control of the wiki page included notifications of user activity and new uploaded content that I could check at regular intervals.

Participation in both wikis was extremely limited and therefore unsuccessful due to the difficulty of logging on and navigating the wikis for participants. Slightly more successful were Facebook 'Group Forums' created for the Manchester community to generate online communication between community members.²⁸ Due to work commitments and time constraints of the participants, these forums were not updated by community members or maintained effectively. The forums provided limited information to contribute to the online ethnographic investigations.

My participation in online investigations for both fieldsites included commenting on a community member's individual posts and 'liking' an online status update or post.²⁹ Actively contributing my thoughts to the participants' comments strengthened my status as community member for both fieldsites as it provided another form of involvement in their events.³⁰ Observing the comments on Facebook also allowed me to witness how participants discussed tap dance and their own practice outside of an interview context. Musicologist Rebecca Cypess states that

[a]lthough the methodology of 'virtual fieldwork' has limitations in terms of personal contact, it is beneficial in that it allows the ethnographer to remain at a distance, to take in the wide variety of perspectives within the community without arousing distrust or self-consciousness among the subjects. Indeed, it allows the subjects to speak for themselves, without imposition by the researcher. (2010: 118)

The online activities provided another dimension of their cultural activity to examine as 'the boundary of a social network might be the online site where the cultural activity was found, or where the community defined itself' (Kozinets 2010: 51). The individuals in both communities engaged in sharing their personal tap practice in digital environment.

In order to capture this practice, I documented 192 Facebook Screen Captures over an eighteen month period from February 2009 until August 2010 to record interactions between participants. I observed on Facebook how participants evaluated the effectiveness of their rhythmic choices in tap jams and reflected on improving future performances. Additional evidence of the tap jams, in the format of digital photographs and online video clips were shared between community members on Facebook. The video clips uploaded to Facebook created opportunities for additional reflection after the event or perhaps alternate perspectives that I was unable to witness.

Participants in both communities shared footage of past American tap practitioners on their personal pages and community Facebook pages. The practice of sharing online video clips is a modern take on how tap dancers used to learn their steps: watching other performers from backstage or in the theatre. A similar trend is present in b-boy/b-girl communities where knowledge of practice is transmitted through ‘mediated and embodied elements such as video artefacts and travelling dancers’ (Fogarty 2012: 453). Just as in the b-boy and b-girl cultures Facebook and Youtube allowed individuals, regardless of their physical location, to experience and learn from former practitioners as previous generations of American tap dancers did, but in the context of a society immersed in computer-mediated social interactions.

Incorporating Facebook into ethnographic fieldwork demonstrated great potential for alternative techniques in conducting my fieldwork, such as supplying a method for

maintaining contact between informants that was more conducive to their demanding schedules. Kozinets explains that

[o]ne of the major advantages of netnography is the fact that, like the ethnography that it is so closely related to, it is a naturalistic technique. In many cases, netnography uses the information publicly available in online forums. However, there are differences that can lead to some useful efficiencies. In terms of expending time making choices about fieldsites, arranging personal introductions, travelling to and from sites, transcribing interview and handwritten fieldnote data and so on, netnography is far less time consuming and resource intensive. (2010: 56)

Netnography appeared to answer many of my questions with respect to how to maintain effective and time efficient communication with participants in the two fieldsites.

Netnography also raised issues specifically within dance ethnography research.

Removing my physical presence from the fieldsites presented difficulties in examining both my embodied movement experiences and those of the community members.

Digital representation of bodies performing, for example Youtube video clips of tap practitioners, invoked a different response among participants than observing live performance.³¹ Watching tap performance on Youtube enabled participants to view aspects of the dance that were missed during the jams, as Samantha Carroll (2008: 200) explains: '[w]atching on YouTube, we have access to all of the archival footage recreated in this performance, and can compare the routines by viewing clips at the same time'. Consideration had to be given to how the participants engaged with online tap performance, what elements they valued in the online performances and how they used this information in their own improvised experiences onstage. I selected online interactions as a means to supplement my physical fieldwork rather than depend on digital communications entirely. If I relied on Facebook as the primary form of interpreting the tap practice of community members then I would discount the physical

performances, participation in technique classes, and kinaesthetic experience of individuals in my physical fieldwork. Participant observation in the digital context of Facebook provided insight as to how individuals in the community viewed their participation in activities such as tap jams, but to determine the full impact of the tap jam on their personal performance practice, a narrower scope was necessary.

Individual Case Studies

Case studies of individual community members were conducted in each fieldsite, following the progress of participants in the communities over a six month period. I selected participants based on their regular involvement and their availability to meet for the case studies outside of scheduled community activities.³² In the Manchester tap dance community two white British women aged between twenty-four and thirty-five years offered to participate in the case study. Both women consistently attended classes, workshops, master classes, and tap jams in Manchester. In the London tap dance community one white British woman aged between forty-four and fifty five years and one African British woman aged between twenty-four and thirty-five years volunteered for the case study. Both women also participated regularly in community sponsored activities in London. All four participants consented to be filmed at the tap jams. The limited availability of participants created the potential for a female-centric interpretation of the case studies as male community members were unavailable. Three of the four participants were also within the twenty-four to thirty-five age range and presented a lack of representation for older community members. Interpreting

differences in the experiences of community members through issues of gender would be more difficult to interpret with a lack of male representation.³³ Despite limited participation, the individual case studies represented a snapshot of the regular attendance of participants in the Manchester and London tap communities. My analysis of questionnaires and observations at both fieldsites revealed that a majority of participants fell within the classification of British, female, and aged twenty-four to thirty-five years.

The participants were filmed three times at separate tap jams in their respective communities over a six month period to generate a selection of their progress in improvised performances. I chose video as it was capable of recording sound and visuals elements of each performance at the tap jams. Participants were able to observe a visual performance of their steps as they listened to their rhythms produced during an improvisation. I also selected video clips as presenting them to participants was the most effective way to interpret what community members valued in their improvisations: the footage captured both the individual's response to their own performance in the moment as well as audience reaction.

The case study video segments lasted between one to three minutes and featured the participants' improvised performances to live music at the tap jams. The individuals were filmed watching their performances to document their reactions to their performance. I used some techniques from self-confrontation video interviews such as asking participants to articulate how they knew to execute a particular step during their improvisation as they watched their performance. Although I was interested in what

experiences individuals had during their improvisation, it was not my intention to focus on methods or approaches such as cognitive ethnography or phenomenology.³⁴ The concept that movement improvisation may be studied reflexively and as ‘the experience close to that which is actually occurring in, through and during an activity’ (Gore *et al* 2013: 129) did appeal to me. I considered applying the explicitation interview technique as created by Pierre Vermersch (1994) in the case studies.³⁵ The explicitation interviews ‘bring[ing] to light the unfolding of the action to a given degree of subtlety of the description’ (Vermersch 1994: 120). Georgiana Gore *et al* explains the technique in detail:

‘[a] premise of the technique is that all action is made up of elementary operations of identification and execution, sequentially organised...the interviewer will have to ‘fragment’ this information using a very specific guidance technique and a series of cues echoing the words used by the interviewee. Such key cues include: “What are you doing when you...?”, “How do you know that...?”, “How do you manage to...?”, “What happens to you when you...?”, “How does it feel?” and “Is it important to you?” These cues focus on structure, never on the content, and allow the researcher to question without inducing the answers’. (2013: 136)

The difficulty in using this technique in the case studies was despite being presented with the footage of their performances, the participants could not answer all of these questions. Due to the improvisatory nature of their performances, participants found questions such as ‘why did you choose that tap step?’ or ‘how did the music make you feel?’ difficult to answer. The individuals could not accurately recall why they had selected particular tap steps or explain what meaning the steps held for them beyond reflecting the music. In the case studies, I also asked the participants to comment on their improvised performances which were not structured, therefore eliminating the effectiveness of the technique.³⁶ I was interested in the content of the improvisations, both the physical steps and musical contributions of the participants. I found only a few

of the questions effective from the technique such as ‘Is it important to you?’ and asked these mainly in regards to the interactions with the musicians. Understanding how the participants engaged with music was essential to identify their individual progress as tap dancers. Ethnologist Tomie Hahn (2007: 118) states that ‘[m]usic cues, much like visual cues, are sonic associations that dancers learn through regular practice and regular immersion in a variety of sonic environments’. The case studies allowed me to study the impact of the ‘sonic environment’ of the tap jams on each participant’s development in their personal tap practice.

Even though an individual can learn improvisation as a skill, I did not want to analyse the tap improvisations of community members as a pre-conceived or learned behaviour. I wanted to explore improvised tap performance as an ongoing creative process rather than a lived moment. The questions were semi-structured, as I was seeking specifically to focus on their response to their choice of improvised steps. I utilised open-ended questions while participants watched the video footage, such as asking them to describe aspects of their performance: ‘what did you feel during that improvisation?’, or ‘describe your interaction with the musicians’. I did allow each participant expand on any element they found particularly engaging, such as one participant choosing to discuss how her gaze changed during her improvisations.³⁷ Participants were also asked to offer an opinion as to which clip they preferred and if they could identify a recognisable ‘style’ during their performance or favourite steps. Although the original atmosphere of the tap jams could not be replicated through recorded footage, my rationale for the use of using short clips was to ensure the participants focussed on the initial impressions of their improvised performances. I wanted to examine how

participants reacted to their performances as they are presented at the jams: fleeting improvised performances that may never be witnessed again. The rationale behind avoiding extended video clips was to circumvent reactions from participants that focussed on analysis of choreographic elements such as repetition or use of space. The video segments were edited to show the segments in a random order. I presented the clips without specifying the date of each tap jam to the participants to determine if they could recognise any improvements or differences in their performances. I was interested in how the participants thought they developed as performers and what impact the participation in the tap jams had on their progress as tap dancers.

Additional interviews with community members in both fieldsites did not produce accurate accounts of the steps selected for their tap performance. The kinetic memory of ‘feeling’ the rhythm in the body during the improvised performance was described by participants as an integral part of the performance but the community members could not fully articulate what happened in the moment. Participants revealed the accurate recall of the exact steps was rarely possible during their tap improvisation. My own experiences during the fieldwork yielded limited recollection of named steps during improvised tap performances.

The case studies were necessary to determine how the individuals experienced their progression through the tap jams as dancers and as a contributing performer to the music. Dance scholar Kent De Spain notes:

[t]o sink beneath the apparency of movement is to come into contact with the intricacies of somatic experience. A good place to begin is to track the dancers' consciousness of their own proprioception. (2003: 30)

While De Spain's observations refer to research conducted with improvisation in contemporary dance practice, I decided to use the case studies to determine how the participants comprehend their own experience of improvised tap performance. This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

The case studies supported observations made in the field regarding individual performance progress. Inclusion of the case studies in the fieldwork addressed the issue of how to identify the development of individual performance identities and progress of the community members. Presenting the community members with video footage to watch back their performances allowed them to discuss their progress as both dancers and musicians. Many individuals within the two communities had additional obligations and commitments to organisations outside of the tap jams, generating significant difficulties in my scheduling of interviews, focus groups, and case studies. I selected individuals for additional interviews on the basis of their availability. The participation of these individuals resulted in small group interviews of two to three participants in London as opposed to a large focus group attended by Manchester community members. The resulting group interviews did produce significant material for analysis despite unequal participation from the separate communities. The individual interviews and group interviews ensured equal consideration of both male and female participants in both tap communities.

Analysis of Fieldnotes and Data

My fieldwork produced a significant amount of data such as video and audio recordings of interviews, written fieldnote observations, photos, screen captures and video footage from classes, workshops, and tap jams. In my initial analysis of fieldnotes, I realised I would need to generate some method of categorising patterns arising from the data.

Grounded theory scholar Christina Goulding cites Morse (1994) in her description of how ethnographers may analyse data from the field:

the search for patterns, and ideas that will help explain the existence of these patterns, taking into consideration emic and etic interpretations. This is frequently done through the application of content analysis, a technique for making inferences from text data. Each word or phrase in a text is categorised by applying labels that reflect concepts such as aggression, denial and so forth inherent within it. Some counting may be done (but not always), and some researchers use factor analysis, although this runs the risk of substituting numbers for rich description and it is rare to see this in an ethnographic study. More often than not, the ethnographer identifies categories and instances within the data by desegregating the text (notes) into a series of fragments which are then regrouped under a set of thematic headings. Comprehension is thought to be complete when the researcher can describe the events, incidents and exceptions from an emic perspective (Morse, 1994). Synthesis, involves coding and content analysis where the data is pooled and the constructed categories are linked. Often, however, ethnographic analysis is not developed beyond the level of “thick description”, presented as informants’ stories and case studies. (2003: 300)

I selected the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software, or CAQDAS,

Nvivo8 as a primary method for my initial analysis of data gathered during fieldwork.

The software facilitated digital archiving and organisation of fieldnotes, annotation of fieldnotes, and preliminary analysis with the use of the ‘coding’ feature to identify themes within the data. Research methodologist Pat Bazeley (2007: 62-63) describes

creating tables for data with each row designated a meaning or definition dependent on your topic: '[u]sing a table in this way assists in clarifying the structure of and response to the experience being reported by the participant...coding additionally replaces the need to use a column to list themes identified within the text'. Utilising CAQDAS software in the analysis of data would assist in the creation of methodical approach to cataloguing recurring information. Bazeley states that

using a computer simply ensures that the user is working more methodically, more thoroughly, more attentively. In these senses, then, it can be claimed that the use of a computer for qualitative analysis can contribute to a more rigorous analysis. (2007: 3)

The process of documenting, organising, and cataloguing data was streamlined by the software. The CAQDAS software functioned as a central archive for all of my data collected during fieldwork. All fieldnotes were word processed for input into the Nvivo8 software. The software created a single source for accessing digital copies of fieldnotes as well as a system for organising data based on classifications such as location, date, and type of data. Digital copies of photos, video recordings, and screen prints of exchanges on social networking sites such as Facebook were archived and labelled within Nvivo8. These sources provided additional evidence to support observations made in fieldnotes at both fieldsites.

I annotated my fieldnotes with the Nvivo8 software. The 'annotation' feature enabled sections of the fieldnotes and interview transcriptions to be highlighted and saved for future analysis. The 'memo' feature allowed me to create additional annotations that could be referenced to themes, ideas, or secondary information sources. Bazeley

maintains these features aid in interpreting data gathered in the field in a more rigorous manner

as computer software will find and include in a query procedure, for example, every recorded use of a term or every coded instance of a concept, it ensures a more complete set of data for interpretation than might occur when working manually. (2007: 3)

The 'coding' feature of Nvivo8 aided in generation of categories for the annotations of fieldnotes. The following sentence was coded as an example of community members in Manchester improvising and therefore filed under the code of 'improvisation':

She showed us how we could add extra heel toes at the beginning change the accents or change the tempo to improvise. She then taught us a paddle and roll combination that repeated three times, right left right, and then asked us to improvise for the last eight counts. During this time Jess put on a song and asked us to improvise and do the combination for the entire song. (Fieldnotes 12.01.2009)

The codes were not generated by the software but created based on initial themes and questions proposed by the research. Improvisation, performer development, how steps were delivered or learned in classes and workshops formed the basis for the codes. The initial annotation and coding elicited thirty-five categories displayed in Figure 1:

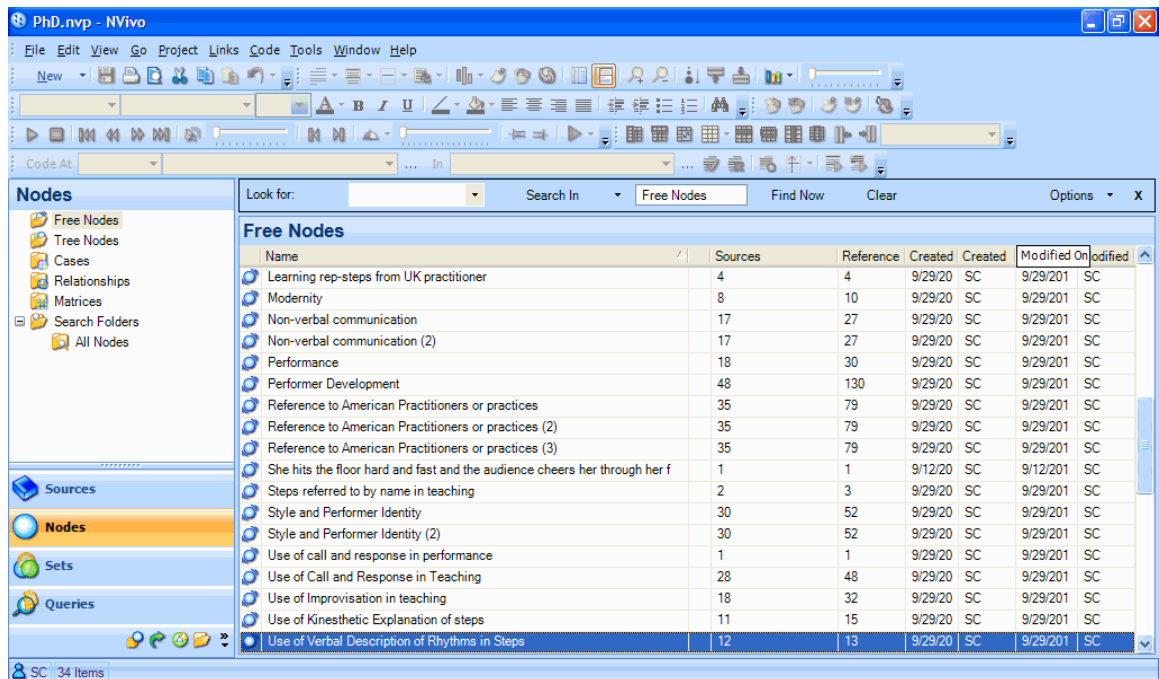


Figure 1: Creation of 'Free Nodes' or coding categories using Nvivo8

The categories for the codes enabled me to track the frequency of my annotations and memos in my fieldnotes. By creating separate categories for my annotations I was able to organise my fieldnotes by each fieldsite quickly and efficiently. My analysis of the codes confirmed which themes from my fieldnotes appeared regularly in the data. The repetition of themes such as 'Performer Development' and 'Style and Performer Identity' guided my decision to formulate more detailed research questions to feature in my thesis. I analysed the codes to track the frequency of annotations categorised under each code as demonstrated by the coloured bars in Figure 2:

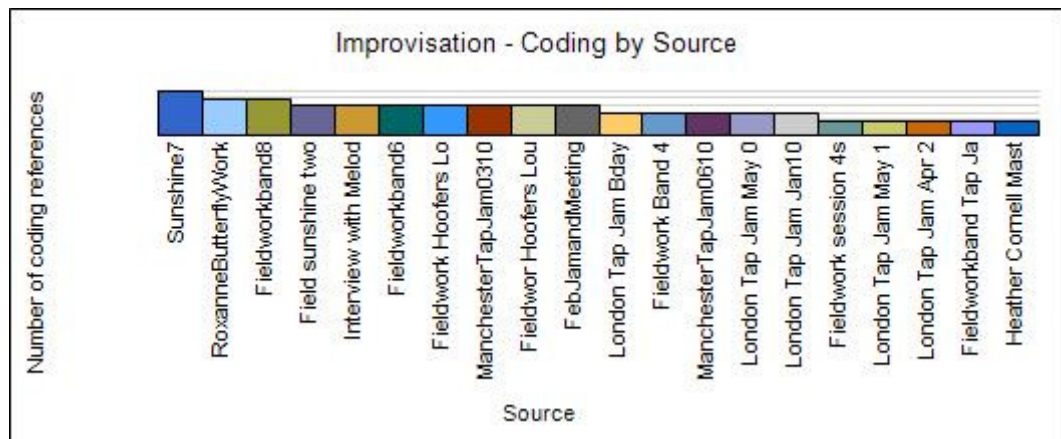


Figure 2: Example of creating tables to visualise frequency of codes within Nvivo8

The Nvivo8 software did not create the codes but assisted in the organisation of their results. I used my discretion to develop individual categories for each code based on my observations and experiences present in my fieldnotes. As Robert Emerson and Linda Shaw (1995: 151) claim, the analysis of the data is interpreted by the individual researcher and will vary based on discipline and methodology. While the use of Nvivo8 does not provide exact analysis based on a predetermined or international standard, the software did ensure that I was able to analyse each document in a methodical manner and that a digital record was created to store each document and my annotations. Bazeley argues that the inclusion of significant fieldwork data in digital formats such as websites, screen captures, and social networking sites requires methods of organisation and analysis that manually written annotations could not provide:

[t]he development of software tools and advances in technology in general have had significant impacts on how research is done. These impacts are not limited to qualitative data analysis. The constantly expanding use of the web to provide access to data is now extending and changing the process of qualitative interviewing as well as the structure of survey and survey samples. (2007: 7)

Incorporating Nvivo8 into the ethnographic investigation addressed the issue of managing large amounts of data gathered from the multiple fieldsites and in multiple formats. By using the software I was able to apply the same analysis to the data gathered in the physical field as information provided from online observations and interactions with participants. The software also provided me with a framework to design the analysis of my fieldnotes in a manner that suited my organisational preferences and needs.

Summary

It was my intention to move beyond anecdotal accounts of tap dancers to understand how the community members learned to improvise. Selecting ethnography as my methodology created an opportunity for me to experience how performers engage in tap improvisation in numerous spaces such as studios, clubs, and online environments. The visual, aural, and kinaesthetic explorations of the participants at tap jams were reinforced by self-reflexivity of my own tap improvisations. Including the methodology of netnography into the research addressed my need to research tap dance within multiple spheres of engagement. Examining how individuals incorporated tap practice into digital as well as physical spaces provided me with insight into how the dance form is transmitted and performed on a global scale. The CAQDAS software created a catalogue to access and interpret data from my fieldnotes in multiple formats and condensed the information into a single source. In the following chapters, I present the

findings of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Manchester and London tap communities.

Notes:

¹ An example is a shuffle step, a brushing motion of the leg to allow the toe tap to strike the floor. The step may be performed to the front, side, or behind the body.

² During informal interviews and discussions community members revealed how their performances changed based on their mood or interpretation of a song. This is examined in further detail in Chapter Five.

³ This technique is seen in explication interviews as advocated by Vermeesch (1994). I discuss this technique in the section on individual case studies in the chapter.

⁴ As an example, I observed the London tap jams in February and March 2009 standing at the back wall in Ronnie Scott's Upstairs Bar. I was able to see the entire venue from this vantage point.

⁵ Tap dancers at the tap jams are encouraged to participate and observe as audience members. When individuals are not performing on stage they act as an audience for other community members. The interchangeable role of community members is analysed in-depth in Chapter Four.

⁶ I discuss how I devised the questions and interpreted the participant's responses in the 'Individual Case Studies' section of this chapter.

⁷ Murray and Laniyan were the primary instructors for the tap technique classes and made themselves available to discuss progression with individuals after the classes finished for the term.

⁸ Participants in the London tap community identify a lack of improvisation in tap classes as a key factor in seeking out Laniyan's sessions and the tap jams. The role of improvisation in their selection of tap activities in London is analysed in Chapter 5.

⁹ One participant in Manchester was completing her PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University and Murray, the tap jam organiser finished her MA at the University of Manchester before attending the Scottish School of Contemporary Dance in 2012.

¹⁰ Tap jam organiser Murray (<http://www.tapproject.com/2009/10/black-history-month-events-from-tap-rhythm-project/> accessed 10.07.14) stated the films were screened to demonstrate a link between past tap practitioners and how the dance form continues to develop today. Her intention was for the community members to become more aware of how the dance form developed prior to her bringing the improvisation techniques to Manchester. The film featured interviews from African-American tap practitioners Chuck Green and Sandman Sims. Murray said this was her reasoning for including the films as part of Black History Month which celebrates African culture and heritage in British society.

¹¹ A detailed analysis of differences in the practices of technique classes and workshops is provided in Chapter Four along with discussion of the organisation, structure, and membership of each tap community.

¹² The organisers chose not to hold tap jams in December due to low attendance during the holidays.

¹³ These key individuals are the tap jam organisers: Jess Murray in Manchester and Junior Laniyan, Dan Sheridan, and Melody Lander in London. The roles and duties of these individuals are analysed in Chapters Four and Five.

¹⁴ Participants frequently attended workshops and tap jams in both fieldsites regardless of where they lived. Individuals in the Manchester community would travel to tap jams in London and London tap dancers would attend tap jams in Manchester. To discount the relationships forged between these two communities would exclude the social bonds valued by the community members.

¹⁵ See Appendix B

¹⁶ The questions asked when and where the participants had started their tap training in order to determine which participants studied with syllabus organisations such as the ISTD or independent dance studios.

-
- ¹⁷ Examining comments exchanged between the tap community members and individuals not participating in community activities provided insight into the changing perceptions of tap dance in England by non-community members. This is discussed in Chapter Six.
- ¹⁸ Falzon (2009: 5) cites structures such as clubs and teams and their use of social networking sites.
- ¹⁹ Falzon (2009: 188) writes, 'the idea that the field exists in a world of distributed knowledge systems and this is often the frame and subject of finding paraethnography. In the anthropologist's striving for a labile multi-sited ethnography that works through processes and in locales, distributed knowledge systems encompass, but replace the dominating conceptual role of culture'.
- ²⁰ Hine (2000: 5) advocates that the Internet may be perceived as both cultural artefact and site of cultural production. Hine's interpretation of a cultural artefact is a broad contextualisation of an object created by designated individuals with specific goals the definition and applied to the individual Facebook Group Pages of each tap community. Hine's approach considers how the internet is experienced by community members within 'the local context of its use'.
- ²¹ Jones (1999) and Miller and Slater (2000) include dance as an activity their participants consider a hobby or pastime in their ethnographies rather than focussing their investigation on dance alone. Their studies aim to understand how individuals create or supplement identity in a virtual world and draw from the disciplines of sociology and psychology.
- ²² London Tap Jam (<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/groups/2647756067/?fref=ts>, 2010) and Tap Rhythm Project (<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/TapRhythmProjectManchester?fref=ts>, 2010)
- ²³ The Facebook website (<https://www.facebook.com/help/www/search/?query=status%20update>, 2013) describes the act of sharing a mood, activity, or location in an individual's timeline on their page as a status update. These may be linked to images, videos, or websites.
- ²⁴ A friend request is an electronic message requesting that one be allowed to join their group of contacts or 'friends'.
- ²⁵ The Facebook website (<https://www.facebook.com/help/www/219443701509174>, 2013) describes 'chatting' as 'a feature that lets you send instant messages to online friends'.
- ²⁶ The Business Dictionary (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/Skype.html>, 2013) defines Skype as a '[f]ree voice over internet protocol (VOIP) service that allows users to communicate across an internet connection by combining voice, video, and instant messaging. The service was released to the public late in 2003'.
- ²⁷ Kozinets (2010: 43) refers to this method as the 'online survey method'.
- ²⁸ The Facebook website (<https://www.facebook.com/help/www/search/?query=group%20forum>, 2013) describes Group Forums as a benefit of creating Groups which 'are private spaces where you can share updates, photos or documents, and message other group members'.
- ²⁹ The Facebook website (<https://www.facebook.com/help/www/219443701509174>, 2013) defines liking a status as 'a way to give positive feedback and connect with things you care about'.
- ³⁰ My contributions to the participants' comments were limited to the times I chose to log on to Facebook, usually only once or twice a day. This meant that I was not always commenting on the posts in real time as I was not always online at the exact time as the participants. My delayed responses did not impact on the information gathered from the interactions with participants. The nature of social networking sites allows conversations to extend over hours and days. Individuals may join or leave these threads or conversations as they will.
- ³¹ My observations and experiences of interacting with community members as they shared and discussed tap video clips are presented in Chapter Six.
- ³² I was unable to recruit all of the community members for the case studies in each community. This did impact on data gathered in the field and I discuss the impact of the selection of participants later in this section.
- ³³ The results of the case study and the impact of lack of male participants is discussed in Chapter Five.
- ³⁴ Gore, Rix-Lièvre, Wathhelet, and Cazemajou (2013:130) describe cognitive ethnography as a method to understand 'how information is stored, distributed and processed...to capture the embodied dimension of cognition by showing how the body mediates judgements'.
- ³⁵ I researched Vermesch's technique but was unable to attend any formal training in his technique. My lack of training did contribute to my decision to not include his technique as part of my methodology.
- ³⁶ The participants revealed the only structure they considered for their improvisations were tempo, musical style (e.g. swing, Latin), or if they would trade eights with the musicians. Even with these guidelines in place before the performance, the participants and musicians could not completely control what would happen during the course of the performance and may deviate from these decisions completely depending on the improvisation.

³⁷ I analyse this participant's comments in more detail in chapter Six.

Chapter 4 Inside the Tap Communities and Tap Jams

The tap jam is a central component in the tap communities of Manchester and London. Exploring how the two tap communities formed around a shared interest in music and dance requires an in-depth analysis of the tap jams. This chapter presents a detailed description of the social organisation of the two communities and the structure and content of the tap jams. I examine elements of the tap jam such as the venues, music, improvisational workshops, and what is exchanged between the tap dancers and musicians on stage. I also discuss how the act of belonging to the tap community creates identity for the participants.

The Tap Communities as Affinity Groups

The term ‘tap community’ is used by the tap jam organisers and participants in both Manchester and London. London tap dancer Walker (Fieldnotes 26.04.09) claimed the two communities formed ‘organically’ around the tap jams and technique classes of Murray and Laniyan. Her comment echoed Susan Spalding’s (1995: 2) idea that a dance form ‘serves as a catalyst for the formation of a community’. The term ‘community’ also suggests a social aspect of individuals gathering together to collaborate instead of training strictly as performers. Community members perceived

the tap jams as social and performance events with an equal opportunity to connect with friends. Spalding defines community as

a result of seeing each other at several dance events each week, the dancers have developed a sense of community among themselves, but it is limited in that they rarely get together except for dances or dance classes. They also have come to value the performance skill that develops as a result of practice. (1995: 27)

There is no official induction process and individuals leave and join the community without precedence. The two groups selected the title of ‘tap community’ consensually, arriving at the term as a combined collective of tap enthusiasts and practitioners.

The two communities may have grown from a shared interest in tap dance but do not conform to all of the conventions of a community as described by ethnochoreologist Catherine Foley (2011: 42): ‘[t]raditionally the notion of community defined a group of interacting people living in a common location with shared common values providing them with a social cohesion’. The individuals in the two tap communities are from numerous ethnic and social backgrounds and reside in several locations within two of the largest cities in England.¹ Variables such as different occupations and multiple levels of education made it difficult to establish if the community members held ‘common values’.²

Commitment to a community is determined by the individual’s sense of belonging.

Ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin describes how individuals join a group with a collective affinity for a selected activity:

[a] choice to follow up an affinity leads to belonging. Yet belonging itself is a complex act. How deep does it go – casual participant, part-time organiser, professional musician? Patterns of commitment can be intensive or desultory for leisure-time affinity groups even within collective ethnic collections. (1996: 56)

Slobin's remarks reflect the initiation into the tap communities and the lack of designated criteria that indicates membership. Repeat attendance at tap jams and classes contributed to familiarity with individuals and performance practices, generating a sense of belonging to a group of individuals that would not gather together outside of tap events. The level of commitment to the tap communities is determined by the individual and demonstrates their interest in the dance form and the amount of dedication to their own progression. Music scholars Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble highlight a similar factor in defining jazz communities. They claim that the act of improvising with other musicians generates a sense of community rather than a physical location:

practices of community formation [that] are porous, flexible, strategic and liberatory, as opposed to ideas about belonging and unbelonging...this entails examining edginess, as well as collectivity; limitations, as well as possibilities of jazz as a site of community-formation, improvisation, and collaboration. (2004: 250)

At the tap jams, the collaborative efforts between musician and tap dancer is the deciding factor for whether or not an individual feels they belong to the community.³ The improvised performances at the jams enable them to form part of a collective performance that forms the site of community just as jazz music defines jazz communities.

Applying a symbolic interactionist perspective to the two tap communities reveals that improvisation acts as a social process through which individuals establish their

membership. By improvising their tap performance and interacting with the musicians, participants engage in the act of belonging. Tonje Langnes and Kari Fasting (2014: 3) describe how breakdancers follow a similar process where '[c]ultural information and behaviour are then diffused through interaction' during performances and meetings. Langnes and Fasting support their approach utilising a subculture model framework:

A symbolic interactionist perspective sees subcultures as culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who share the meaning of specific ideas (e.g. values, beliefs), material objects (e.g. clothing) and practices (e.g. rituals, language, ways of moving) through interaction (Williams, 2011: 39). These shared meanings "set them apart from the larger culture, dominating their life and stabilising over time" (Atkinson and Young, 2008: 9). (2014: 3)

Symbolic interactionism captures the experience of joining the tap communities but the two groups do not fit the model of a subculture. Individuals did not perceive their participation in tap jams as a mark of separation from other social processes such as family or employment. The two tap communities appear to closely resemble Slobin's (1996) affinity groups. Slobin (1996: 98) writes that affinity groups are 'like-minded music-makers drawn magnetically to a certain genre that creates strong expressive bonding'. His approach considers that individuals from different social and ethnic groups may be drawn to a single genre of music regardless of cultural backgrounds:

[a]ffinity groups, however, locate themselves at a determined point and may even build walls around their musical strongholds. They serve as nuclei for the free-floating units of our social atmosphere, points of orientation for weary travelers looking for a cultural home. (1996: 98)

The two tap communities did not create restrictions or 'walls' surrounding the dance form, attracting individuals from diverse walks of life such as students, civil servants, lecturers, and artists. The tap communities acted as focal point for individuals who

were interested in both music and dance. Ronström (1999: 136) suggests approaching the social function of a community ‘not as two independent expressive forms but as parts of a larger and more important analytical level, the event’. He (1999: 136) states that when examining communities and the social processes accompanying music and dance, researchers must consider how to interpret the data, stressing that ‘music and dance are about *doing*’.

The tap communities developed from the participation of individuals, instructors, musicians, and event organisers. Individuals regularly attending jams may not be involved in the organisation, teaching, or accompaniment of tap dance but recognise themselves as members of the tap communities.⁴ The core of each tap community is formed by the organisers of the tap jams who act as a nexus in the communication between participants. Jess Murray (Manchester) and Junior Laniyan, Melody Lander, and Dan Sheridan (London) are responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the events.⁵

Participants consider the jazz trios performing at the tap jams as part of the communities. Musicians take the stage to improvise with tap dancers throughout the events. Although a core of musicians exists in the trios selected for the jams, musicians may join the bands depending on their individual availability. No criteria for training, level of experience, or genre of music is required for musicians to perform at the tap jams. My observations from both fieldsites documented musicians playing the zitar, electric and acoustic guitar, bass, violin, piano, a variety of woodwind and brass

instruments, and drums. Vocalists were welcomed at each tap jam and perform across a broad spectrum of music genres from jazz to rap.

Participants with an intention to watch but not perform musically or as a tap dancer were present at the tap jams. Audience members were encouraged to perform and tap dancers acted as supportive audience members when they were not on stage. The attendance of these individuals fluctuated at each event. Many audience members could be clearly identified and recognised at the majority of tap jams but unfamiliar faces frequently occupied the cushions and chairs at each jazz club. Often these individuals did not return to the tap jams and could not be contacted for further interviews.

The roles of community members are fluid and occupy multiple spheres. Musicians were observed putting on tap shoes and stepping on to the stage to perform. I also witnessed tap dancers singing or playing a song on another instrument with the jazz trio. Returning to the field to observe tap jams after 2011 also discovered changes in roles for community members as they participated more regularly in the organisation of the tap jams.⁶ The shifting roles are determined by each individual community member and are not subject to any explicit conditions for membership. The initiation and duration of community membership was determined by each individual. My integration into the two tap communities did not include any specific action other than my repeated attendance and engagement in community activities. Membership of the tap communities was not defined by residing within a selected city, as each event is attended by non-residents of Manchester or London.⁷

The two tap communities do not operate as a commercial venture and the tap jams do not produce a high profit for either group. Tap jam organisers charge a minimal amount for attendance, five pounds in Manchester and six pounds in London, and only five pounds if you bring tap shoes or an instrument. Organisers in both communities stressed that the price of admission only covers basic operating costs such as renting the venue or storage of the tap floor in the London tap community. Community members paid for technique classes individually but organisers stated that this fee applies to studio rental and a supplemental wage for instructors. Individuals such as Laniyan, Walker, and Murray did not utilise their tap classes for community members as a primary source of personal income. Master classes and workshops also included fees for community members and were a higher price than weekly technique classes. The money paid for transport and housing of international practitioners and does not produce any substantial profit for the tap jam organisers.

The lack of income produced by the tap jams and technique classes suggest the formation of the tap communities developed from artistic intentions. In response to questionnaires distributed at the May 2010 London Tap Jam, every individual attending the pre jam workshop, or Renegade Stage listed 'confidence' as a primary reason for wishing to perform at the jams and participating in these workshops. Individuals in both communities, interviewed separately, again listed developing their confidence as a primary reason for attending the jams. Confidence in every instance is linked directly to improvisation and performance. Finding the confidence to perform as a tap dancer in front of an audience, as one informant told me 'with no clue as to what you will do when you're up there' (Fieldnotes 23.05.10) is an achievement many individuals value

in the community. Community members were welcomed to the tap jams by the hosts with phrases such as ‘tonight is for you guys’ (Fieldnotes 26.10.10) implying the events were organised for the performers rather than the paying audience. Throughout the tap jams the host may comment on rhythmic choices or individual interpretations of rhythms but does not provide any indication of members achieving any performance criteria.

Participants perceive the act of improvising as a contributing factor to their identity as a tap community member rather than a strict affiliation with either locale. Belonging to the tap community is not determined by gender, ethnicity, or age, but by expressing a desire to explore rhythm and improvisation.

The Manchester Tap Community

The Manchester tap community consisted of approximately twenty regular members. The attendance varied each school term based on the availability of the individuals. Typical attendance in weekly tap technique classes revealed eight to twelve members participating in the Beginner’s level class and eight individuals in the Intermediate/Advanced sessions. The participants were primarily female with two regular male attendees in weekly technique classes. Most participants were located in the twenty-five to thirty-four year old age range with four participants aged from forty to fifty-nine years old. All but two participants were white-British. Individuals lived throughout Manchester and surrounding boroughs and one participant travelled weekly

from Wigan to attend classes. The community members held occupations such as firefighter, students, housewife, and youth dance theatre coordinator.⁸ The tap jams were attended by twenty to thirty individuals. A gradual increase was observed over the designated fieldwork period.⁹



Figure 3: Members of the Manchester tap community performing at the June 2010 jam.

Murray is the primary organiser of the tap jams, technique classes, and workshops. The eight community members participating in the Intermediate/Advanced classes and two

from the Beginner classes joined the community through attending Murray's classes. The other community members began joining in the classes and community activities after attending a tap jam. There is no membership requirement to join the community as a regular member and some individuals only attend the classes and jams for one school term.

The primary activities for community members are attending the weekly technique classes and performing at tap jams. The technique classes were held at the Sunshine Studios in Manchester for the spring school term in 2009 (January to March) before moving to Band on the Wall jazz club in September of 2009. The move to Band on the Wall was initially a trial as part of a music and dance education programme and became a permanent fixture after the success of the first tap jam in December 2009. Jess Murray organised the tap jams and led the weekly technique classes. Four individuals from the Intermediate/Advanced class assisted Murray with tasks such as comprising the song list or advertising the tap jams.



Figure 4: Manchester tap community tap technique classes.

Community members also participated in Renegade Stage workshops prior to or during the tap jams to hone their improvisation skills.¹⁰ Master classes and workshops were arranged throughout the terms but the sessions were scheduled according to the availability of practitioners. Heather Cornell, Annette Walker, and Max Pollak delivered workshops throughout the course of my fieldwork in Manchester. A film screening of tap dance documentaries occurred in October 2010 as part of Black History month but this event was not repeated annually due to Cornell being unavailable.



Figure 5: Manchester community members participating in a Renegade Stage workshop during the December 2009 Tap Jam.

The majority of community members viewed their role as participants in weekly classes and as audience members and performers at the tap jams. Participants described feeling involved with the community regardless of whether they actively contribute to the organisation of the tap jams or technique classes:

It seems to be quite compact, everyone knows everyone and Jess is good at communicating what she knows is happening. Other than that I wouldn't know where to find out what classes or events are happening in the tap community in Manchester, it's heavily reliant on word of mouth...Yes I think there are a fairly limited number of people who like to tap at an advanced level and so as one of a few I feel like part of the community. I feel like more of a passive member of the community but part of it none the less. (Fieldnotes, Interview with H. Aust 06.12.09)

Individuals in the Intermediate/Advanced classes also discussed how they found Murray's sessions as the only source of rhythm tap and improvisation in Manchester. They enjoyed the atmosphere of the sessions and the ability to progress at their own pace. Some participants from the Beginner classes claimed that learning to tap dance was a life-long ambition. Four members in the Intermediate/Advanced disclosed that they were returning to tap dance after years of ISTD or IDTA syllabus tap training. The individuals maintained that there were no adult level tap classes in Manchester outside of Murray's throughout the duration of my fieldwork:

I guess it's not bad, but for the second city in England you would expect more. Since I've met more people through Jess I've found out a few more things that are going on but from 8-12 years old I always had have an eye open for advanced tapping opportunities and couldn't really find anything. (Fieldnotes, Interview with H. Aust 06.12.09)

The Manchester community has a smaller membership than the London tap community and tap jams do not occur every month due to the limited numbers of individuals.

Although participants frequently invite family members and friends to the tap jams, the attendance was not enough to validate the cost of holding monthly tap jams. Murray stated that while community members assist her with the jams, the size of the community does not necessitate designated administrative roles as in the London tap community. Community members claimed the fewer numbers created closer relationships between individuals. Friendships are maintained outside of classes and jams and individuals often meet as a group for drinks at pubs after classes to socialise.

The social elements of the Manchester tap community are valued by community members but do not define the community as a purely social organisation. The tap jams

are not considered a site for social dancing and do not fit performance scholar Barbara Cohen-Stratyner's guidelines for social dance:

One of the assumptions made about social dance is that it serves a social purpose. In the ethnographic model, it is generally seen as a form of social organizer, reinforcing societal norms within the contexts of celebrations or mating rituals. Traditional European and non-Western social dance is believed to function as a community unifier without direct financial transactions. One of the many social uses of dance is that everybody gets together to celebrate something. (2001: 121)

For many community members the tap jams and classes are an organised source for meeting to share enthusiasm for tap dance. Although members meet outside of classes and tap jams to socialise, the gatherings are not considered celebratory or ritualistic. The bonds between individuals are forged through understanding and practice of a dance technique as dance scholar Judith Hamera explains:

[t]echnical protocols make intimacy possible by offering shared vernaculars and interpretative strategies; these, in turn support the interpersonal and communal exchanges that make dancing communities go. (2007: 18)

Intimacy between individuals is achieved through the process of improvising together, generating social bonds as well as creative partnerships. The focus of the tap community is not gathering strictly to socialise but to perform, develop, and support one another during improvised tap dance.

The London Tap Community

The London tap community is comprised of approximately fifty members. These individuals regularly attended the tap jams or Laniyan's technique classes at Pineapple Dance Studio. Community members invited friends and family to the tap jams and the attendance often exceeded one hundred individuals. Attendance patterns for Laniyan's classes were eight to fourteen individuals and varied each week. Similar to the Manchester tap community, most participants are female but the proportion of male individuals was more evenly matched. The sample of participants from questionnaires revealed seventy percent are female and thirty percent male but observations from two tap jams in 2010 presented almost equal numbers of men and women in attendance. Forty percent of participants approached in the questionnaires fell within the twenty-five to thirty-four year old age range but participants as young as eighteen were witnessed at the tap jams. The late American tap dancer Will Gaines was in his early eighties during my observations of the jams and two individuals listed their age as fifty-five and older in the questionnaires.¹¹ The participants are predominantly white-British and African-British but Korean, Chinese, Brazilian, Spanish, and American individuals also attended the London tap jams. Individuals lived throughout London and the surrounding boroughs. Questionnaire results revealed participants held a range of occupations such as lecturers, engineers, students, and personal shoppers.



Figure 6: Community members performing at the London Tap Jam October 2009.

Laniyan, Lander, and Sheridan are identified as the primary tap jam organisers. Each organiser performs at the tap jams in addition to their organisational tasks. While all three individuals shared the responsibility of coordinating the jams, each member takes on specialised roles during the event. Laniyan hosted the jam, acting as an emcee throughout the evening by calling dancers to the stage. The set list for the evening is managed by Lander. She ensured individuals are able to sign up for their turn at improvising. Sheridan assembled and maintained the technical equipment, setting up microphones and adjusting the sound levels throughout the event. The organisation's website credits Walker as the leader of the Renegade Stage on but she is not identified with the role of tap jam organiser.

Off stage, the organisers divided the administrative roles of the tap jams. Lander managed publicity for the tap jams through communication on social networking sites, flyers, and Youtube videos. The tap jam website was designed and regularly updated by Sheridan, who also handled all electronic commerce going through the site.¹² Laniyan communicated with the owners of the venue and ran the weekly technique classes at Pineapple Dance Studio.



Figure 7: Lander and Laniyan discuss the set list at the November 2009 Tap Jam.

Both Lander and Sheridan shared Laniyan's and Murray's vision of improvised tap performance in England. The involvement of the two jam organisers was crucial to Laniyan's goal of a tap jam in London:

Junior had wanted to do a jam for a while and I think we all thought it would be a good thing to do. But I think, as far as Junior's concerned, he needed people on board that would actually make things happen (laughs). Um, so he was thinking about it, talking about it, after a class, I think, you know, and Dan and I were there, and we were both very serious about it and decided we wanted to make it happen. So after that, we had lots of meetings and lots of discussions and everything and worked out what we were going to do. And um, and then the first tap jam happened. (Fieldnotes, Interview with Melody Lander 02.06.09)

The community members attended the weekly tap technique classes with Laniyan. My observations of the technique classes included some examples of Laniyan's class led by another tap dancer when he was engaged with other commitments. Sheridan led the class once and another session was taught by an American tap dancer named Parker visiting London and performing at the jam. Laniyan revealed that he did not have specific requirements for substitutes in his sessions: only that the individual could lead improvisation exercises and was available to cover for him.

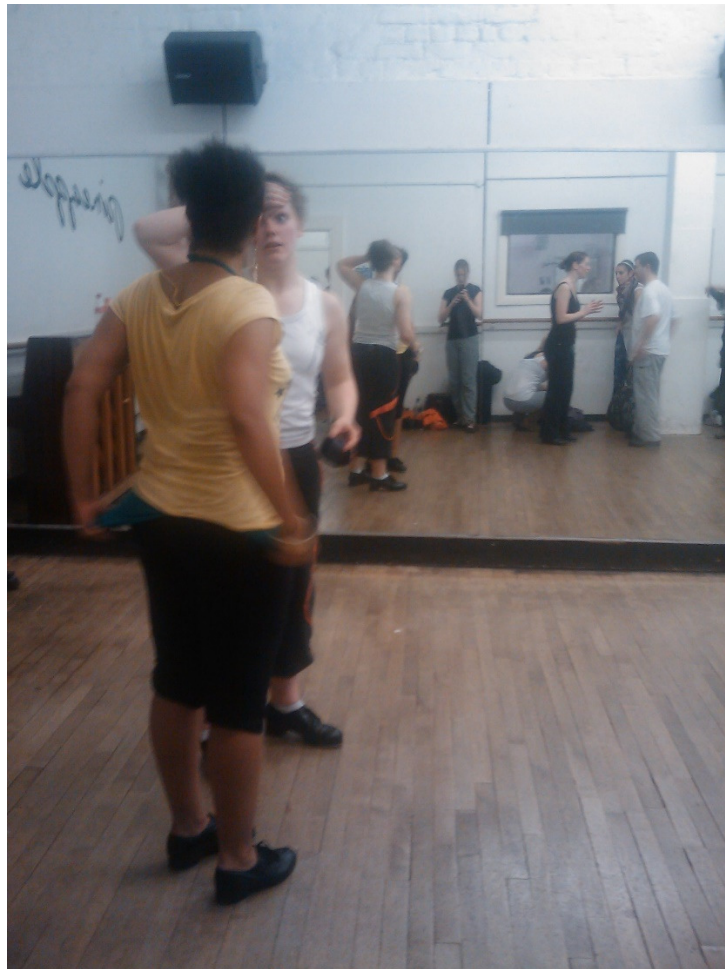


Figure 8: Community member speaks to Lisa La Touche at a master class at Pineapple Dance Studios in October 2010.

The London tap community regularly hosted master classes and workshops by professional tap practitioners. Max Pollak, Lisa La Touche, Roxanne Butterfly, Andrew Nemr, and Heather Cornell led master classes and workshops. The tap jam organisers scheduled these classes based on the availability of the practitioner, such as when she was touring the United Kingdom or passing through England on their way to perform in Europe. The jam organisers also tried to arrange special workshops to celebrate the anniversary of the tap jams. During October 2010 I participated in Heather Cornell's

master classes as these were advertised as part of the ‘birthday activities’ for the fourth anniversary of the London tap jams.

Tap jam organisers Lander and Sheridan maintained that the London tap community formed around Laniyan’s tap classes at Pineapple Dance Studios:

Junior basically started his classes, which he probably told you, really so that he could find other tap dancers (laughs). And so that’s kind of how the scene has grown, actually, it started from Junior’s tap classes. And there’s a number of us that have been doing it for a long time, and other people that have kind of joined in, and so there’s a hard core of Junior’s tap class people. (Fieldnotes, Interview with Melody Lander 02.06.09)

Although many individuals attended Laniyan’s classes with Sheridan and Lander, the tap jam is the introduction to the tap community for some members. These participants are invited by members or learn about the tap jam from flyers or digital media such as the tap jam website or Facebook page. There appeared to be no impact on an individual’s membership as to whether they initiate their participation in the community through the classes or tap jams; all tap dancers, audience members, musicians, and tap enthusiasts are welcome.

Participants act as both performers and audience members at the London tap jams.

When they are not improvising on stage, the community members felt their role is to be:

[s]upportive of what they are trying to achieve by getting tap out there into the community. Encouraging them to publicise what they do and when they do it. Cajoling them to update their websites. (Fieldnotes, Interview with V. Annand 10.01.10)

The participants valued the encouragement of both audience and performers at the tap jams. My observations at tap jams of individuals sharing congratulations on improvised

performances were supported by interactions between community members on social networking sites such as Facebook. Annand regularly posted video clips and photos of community members' performances and this generated supportive discussions and gratitude among participants in the tap jams and digital spaces.¹³ Community members who are not involved with the tap jam organisation focus on their performance and tap practice. Similar to the Manchester community the participants view their roles as attending weekly tap technique classes, performing and supporting tap dancers at the jams.

Participants at the London tap jams and tap technique classes claimed the possibility of improvised tap practice drew them to the London tap community. Tap jam organiser Sheridan describes how meeting a student of Laniyan inspired him to attend classes at Pineapple:

a chance encounter when I was Edinburgh with one of Junior's students, uh who was teaching a workshop up there on rhythm tap. And she was talking about things like the New York Tap Festival and the idea of improvisation and that got me started on that aspect of tap dance. (Fieldnotes, Interview with Dan Sheridan 02.06.09)

Sheridan's experience is mirrored by other community members such as tap jam organiser Lander:

I found Junior's class, and it was good that I actually started tapping again... that I found Junior's class, 'cause if I found another class I'd probably would have gone once or twice and then not tapped again. But found Junior's class, it said 'rhythm tap – Junior' and I thought 'hmm, sounds quite good', went along, and I've just been going ever since. (Fieldnotes, Interview with Melody Lander 02.06.09)

Laniyan acted as a focal point for individuals to gather in London, but it was the introduction of improvising tap steps that created the foundation for the community. Individuals wanted to explore tap dance within parameters that did not require them to adhere to strict examination vocabulary or criteria.

Laniyan's rhythm tap classes and the tap jams attracted performers and tap enthusiasts from a broad range of social backgrounds and tap experience. A participant in the London community describes its diversity:

London has a diverse tap community – people know people across the networks of American tap, English tap, and Rhythm tap, Improvisation. However, its little pockets of networks – rather than what I imagine the scene to be in New York which seems to be much more mainstream...They (community members) have been incredibly welcoming and patient with someone who is a bit older than the majority. At the same time, I have put something back into the community by taking photos, putting them on Facebook, on my Flickr page, taking moving film, supporting the individuals when they perform at other venues. And being a friendly face, even when I'm not dancing. (Fieldnotes, Interview with V. Annand 10.01.10)

The concept of 'little pockets of networks' reflects how the participants perceive their involvement in their own community as well as within England. Anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (1989:78) describes how '[t]he resulting networks of personal relationships throughout the country reinforced the awareness of a wider...world in which local performers took part'. The community members cultivate social bonds such as friendships in addition to create a supportive environment of tap enthusiasts. The relationships do not form a unified or 'mainstream' community, as the participant described the New York tap community. Instead, London's tap community reflects Slobin's (1996: 98) model of the affinity groups. Ronström writes how music and dance can bring individuals together through a desire to communicate:

all this music and dance has come to form an enormous palette of expressive forms, by which people can express and communicate the most detailed and nuanced messages about themselves, who they are, what they stand for, their wishes, dreams and hopes. If formerly you could say; “Show me what you read and I will tell who you are!” today it is more likely that it is their record-collections that will give the best clues as to what interests, belongings and values people have. All these radical changes has made music and dance central as never before; to the formation of individual and collective identities, from local, and regional to national and international; to ways of socialising and networking. (1999: 135-136)

Similar to Ronström’s analogy of record collections depicting an individual’s values, each tap group appreciates different methods of expressing music and dance. The various approaches create additional satellites groups for tap dancers wishing to focus on technique rather than improvisation.

The idea of separate groups of tap dancers in London was supported by Derek Hartley, a white-British man in his fifties teaching tap classes at Pineapple Dance Studios. He does not participate in the London Tap Jams or any other community sponsored event such as workshops or master classes. Hartley identified a group of individuals regularly attending his tap classes, but did not regard the individuals as part of any community.

Everyone’s doing their own thing. Junior has a thing... called tap jam, have you heard of that...so he organises that...he has his own kind of circle like I have my circle...what you saw today, that’s just, you know maybe a quarter of, you know, an eighth of what I have. (Fieldnotes 17.05.10)

When clarifying the term ‘circle’, Hartley stated that, ‘there’s no kind of tap “thing” going on’ (Fieldnotes, interview with Derek Hartley 17.05.10) due to separate groups of individuals participating in different tap classes. Hartley viewed individuals regularly attending his class as membership of his ‘circle’.¹⁴ The term circle implies that

individuals occupy equal positions instead of differing ones within a clear hierarchy. He claimed that Laniyan organises a separate ‘circle’, again without mentioning any distinct organisational structure of the group. Hartley’s description of the tap community does not name it as an official community, but he does acknowledge the existence of a group of individuals gathering to practice and perform improvised tap dance. Although community members and Hartley confirm the presence of separate tap activities and dancers outside of the tap jams in England, participants still refer to the group attending Laniyan’s classes as the ‘London tap community’.¹⁵

My integration into the London community was demonstrated through an affinity as a tap dancer with another community member:

I go and sit down next to Annette and Vicky in the alcove behind the tap floor/stage... Junior talks to me about his recent tour with River Dance and I talk about how I’m struggling with not being able to tap as much as I used to. I tell him how hard I find it to go from tapping 3 or 4 hours a day or at least every other day to two hours once a week... He speaks to me as he would another performer, not as a researcher or a beginning student and I feel a smile come to my face that I have achieved something. I cannot say for sure which pleases me more, that I feel a part of this community now and no longer as an outside researcher or that I am a performer equal in his eyes. (Fieldnotes 25.04.10)

The selections from fieldnotes provide no mention of formal recognition of my transition from ‘outsider’ to ‘insider’ within the tap communities. A connection is made through a mutual understanding of tap practice. Inclusion in the community is understood as an appreciation of tap dance and its practice. My membership and entrance is noted by my willingness to share my performance practice with the community and to contribute as a community member by supporting other individuals in their personal rhythmic journeys.

The two tap communities formed approximately at the same time through Laniyan and Murray. There are differences in the size of membership but the organisational structure and activities are similar in each fieldsite. The London tap community is larger and more diverse than the Manchester community.¹⁶ The parallels between the two communities exist due to Murray and Laniyan sharing the same vision of helping individuals to develop their improvisation skills in their performances at tap jams.

Introducing the Tap Jam to England

English tap dancers Murray and Laniyan wanted to create events where tap dancers could improvise to live music. Murray described how exploring tap dance in America inspired her to bring tap jams to England:

in summer of 2002 I realized that I was really missing dancing and missing tap dance particularly, and started to look around for things that were happening, and found that New York had festivals...I had been talking to friends about going to tap jams and improvising and experimenting and developing a distinctive style but I didn't realize anybody here was doing it...I went to the States and I thought that it was actually that great that I was attending jams every night and that was brilliant... and since then I was simply hooked on the art form and wanting to know more about it. So I came back to the UK, finished my degree, and I had this idea in mind that rather than going to the States, I wanted to do something here about it...and want to bring that kind of dancing of tap to the UK. And at the time there wasn't a lot happening, there were a few people around, Diane, Derek, Junior Laniyan teaching tap here in London...I spoke with him and we spoke about what we wanted for the UK. And at that point, Junior had already identified the need for the tap jam, and acted as a centrifugal force within the tap community. (Fieldnotes 11.03.09)

London tap dancer Laniyan was also motivated by his impressions of tap jams in New York City:

the first time I heard of a jam session was probably in...New York in...I think it was 98 the first time that I went, it might be 99...I went, did a few classes, really enjoyed them, and went to Swing46, and I just went "Wow!" You know, I was like this is what people can do to express themselves. They can do their thing. I was lucky I had performed before, you know, I was teaching at the time and one of very few people doing rhythm tap and improvising. And I just remember thinking at the time, we need something like this in London, we have to have something like this in London. (Fieldnotes 05.04.09)

Witnessing tap dance in the context of the New York tap jams demonstrated to Murray and Laniyan the potential for improvised tap performance. Both tap practitioners claim improvisation is necessary to allow individuals to express their creativity in performance. Laniyan and Murray identified the need for English tap dancers to develop improvisation skills in order to present more expressive performances. The two English tap dancers claim that tap jams are the best method to accomplish this goal.

The tap jam is an informal performance event that features improvised tap dance to live music. The tap jams are held monthly in London and once per school semester in Manchester. Throughout the evening performers provide their name to one of the event organisers in order to compose the song list and running order. The songs provided are jazz standards, such as 'Caravan' by Tizol and Ellington or 'Take Five', by Dave Brubeck. Individuals select a song they wish to perform with the band and may improvise in solos, duets or small groups. The participants converse with the musicians just prior to their performance to determine the tempo and duration of the song. Some individuals may decide how many choruses, verses, and with whom they will 'trade fours' or 'trade eights' during their performance. 'Trading fours' or 'trading eights' refers to an improvised exchange between a tap dancer and musician. The tap dancer will improvise for two to four bars or for one or two counts of eight and stop to allow

the musician to improvise for the same amount of time.¹⁷ The tap dancer and musician will alternate their improvisations until they decide to return to the original composition of the song.

Each individual is welcomed to the stage by the host of the event, usually one of the tap jam organisers or another professional tap dancer in the community. The host informs the audience that every performance will be improvised. The event is broken down into parts or halves with a fifteen minute interval.¹⁸ The tap jam ends with the individuals being called to the stage for a final song in which each performer does a short improvised solo. At some jams, this tune finishes with a choreographed routine known to most tap dancers as the ‘Shim Sham Shimmy’.¹⁹

Tap Jam Venues

The tap jam venues in Manchester and London draw inspiration from Murray and Laniyan’s visits to New York City but how the performers and audience are situated in the space is different for each location. Ronnie Scott’s Upstairs Bar in London is a jazz bar equipped for live music. The stage is a portable, sprung wooden platform purpose built to fit within a narrow alcove of the bar. The stage is only brought into the bar area for the tap jams and is stored during normal business hours and instrumental gigs. My observations of the tap jams at Ronnie Scott’s describe how audience, participants and staff interact in the venue:

I open the door and am greeted with a blast of noise and heat. The room is full of people and as I'm late, Annette has already started the 'Renegade Stage'.²⁰ The walls are the same deep red as the stairway and there is dark wood and gold trim running along the edges. Directly to my left is a separate room, filled with booths and tables where people are eating and chatting. In front of me is the upright piano tucked into the corner on a diagonal and the wooden stage next to it. Behind the stage is a small alcove set into the wall with more booths, but instead of people it is filled with jackets, bags, instrument cases. In front of the stage is a spread of bright blankets, cushions, and pillows, and a few people have already staked out a seat, spreading their bags about them in hopes of reserving a spot for friends to come later. I see Ben already by the front of the stage putting on his shoes. To the right of the stage is the bar, set back from the floor and with a low ceiling. The staff is busy behind the bar, making drinks and shouting to one another. At one end of the bar is the door to the kitchen, which two short brass poles and a burgundy rope clipped between them to dissuade participants from wandering into the kitchen. At the other end of the bar, by the stage, is a small room, almost a closet, and in there I glimpse more bags and a short desk that houses the sound equipment. The stage is miked by two microphones and speakers on poles bookmark either side of the stage. As I make my way towards the bar, I notice another alcove across from the stage filled with short, black, square stools and two tables. Most of the stools have already been occupied by chatting people...the room is full of people, very crowded already, and I'm starting to regret wearing a sweater. (Fieldnotes 22.03.09)

The room is not designed for formal dance performances or large, seated audiences.

The performance space is shared with restaurant furniture, bar staff, performers, and musicians. The audience has the option to stand and move freely along the edges of the space or sit on the floor in front of the stage. The non-performance activities, such as delivering drinks and food to restaurant patrons, creates an atmosphere similar to the intimate clubs and bars such as Swing 46 in New York City. Unlike the bars of New York City, the tap jam organisers include cushions and blankets in front of the stage for the audience. The rationale for this is that the seated audience members allow individuals standing at the edges of the space or the back of the bar to see the performances easily.



Figure 9: Ronnie Scott's Upstairs Bar set up for the September 2009 Tap Jam.

The Manchester tap jam is also held in a jazz bar. Band on the Wall was renovated and re-opened in September 2009. The main performance area is a raised stage with small tables and chairs clustered below. The design of the performance area is meant to be viewed from a second level seating section:

It was the upper floor of the main club room, and although it was dimly lit, I could tell that the tables and chairs we walked by were brand new. The light grey carpet was also new. We walked to a balcony rail and Tom, the owner, pointed down to a small stage and explained that it was a new sound system with the amplifiers under the actual stage floor. The stage had dark red curtains drawn across it but I could see part of a new wooden, black floor. In front of the stage was a section of carpet with a unique pattern of cables and ports/connectors of what looked like auxiliary cables one might plug into an amplifier except they were huge: each cable was probably six feet in length and a different primary colour. Groupings of tables with three chairs each were scattered in

front of the stage, close together...behind that section of carpet is the bar and more tables and chairs. The entire room smelled of new paint. (Fieldnotes 28.09.09)

The tables and chairs in front of the stage are grouped so that all audience members have good visibility of the stage. Audience members and tap dancers do not compete with bar staff for space at the tap jams. The venue offers only a beverage service and the bar is situated at the far side of the room opposite the stage.



Figure 10: The audience gathered around small tables at Band on the Wall for the June 2009 Tap Jam in Manchester.

Tap jam organiser Murray selected the venue because its primary function is to host jazz concerts. Murray's rationale is to draw jazz enthusiasts as well as tap dancers to the tap jams. She believes the venue attracts audiences from both disciplines.²¹ London tap jam organiser Melody Lander admits the intimate setting of a jazz bar in each fieldsite places focus on the performance of music rather than dance:

for us that is extremely significant (to be asked to host the tap jams in Ronnie Scott's) because that is the club for jazz in Britain. So to be asked to go there is fantastic, and I don't think we could go to a venue that would be more significant than that. (Fieldnotes: interview with Melody Lander 02.06.09)

Lander claims the connection between jazz music and the tap jams for the audience is dependent on the venues. She proposes associating tap dance with a jazz club such as Ronnie Scott's could broaden the appeal to non-tap dancers:

whether you're a tap dancer or not a tap dancer the important things we've done with the jams, is that we are, the way we structure it, the way we do it, it's just as important to get people that are non-tap dancers to attend as it is to get tap dancers. So actually, most people who attend are not tap dancers, they're just going there 'cause they found this new thing, 'tap dance!' They didn't know it was like that, and they really enjoy it and it's cool. And so, we really, a big part of tap jam is spread the message of what tap dance really is and what it can be like, and just kind of spread the word, create a scene. (Fieldnotes: interview with Melody Lander 02.06.09)

Murray and Lander both claim that the venue is crucial to maintaining a supportive environment for community members. A large dance performance space, such as a theatre 'will put people off who might want to get up and tap but are nervous about getting on stage in front of an audience' (Fieldnotes 19.11.09). The casual environments allows community members to engage in a relaxed atmosphere without the pressure of a formal dance production.

Audience members at the tap jams are encouraged to provide immediate feedback in the form of cheers and applause. The tap dancer relies on the audience reaction for encouragement and guidance; when an improvisation is flowing the audience may respond positively. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (2004: 71) discuss the effect of audience inclusion in jazz communities: ‘the interactive nature of musical improvisation encourages both musicians and audiences to rethink traditional expectations about the expression *and* the reception of musical meaning’. By including the audience in their practice of rhythmic and musical exploration, tap dancers actively integrate the audience members into their creation of the music. The informal presentation of the improvised performances at the jams encourages a more inclusive role from audience members and challenges their expectations of a traditional dance performance.

Renegade Stage

In declaring a need for tap jams in England, Laniyan and Murray encountered many challenges organising the early events. Scheduling conflicts with the venues and determining the frequency of the jams were initially concerns for the organisers. Introducing community members unfamiliar with tap jam etiquette was also problematic. The jam organisers realised the early syllabus training of many participants did not prepare them for improvisation to live music. Murray recounts the difficulties of implementing the early tap jams:

I think that the ones in New York already have an audience, and a very strong tradition in that place, and they have people there that have decades of experience, and a very interesting installation of a, not hierarchy, but of respected individuals...I think that the jams in New York can run quite organically because the rules and instructions and codes are already embedded within the group, whereas when the first one ran in Liverpool, everybody was getting into it without really knowing what to expect. (Fieldnotes: interview with Jess Murray 11.03.09)

The 'rules and instructions and codes' Murray refers to are in the form of verbal advice passed between performers and musicians. These instructions provided tap dancers with the knowledge of how to start, finish and direct the musicians throughout the improvised pieces. The participants needed to understand how to set and maintain the tempo, guide the musicians through any changes to choruses and verses, and select the steps that complemented or accented rhythms in the song. The tap jam organisers required a method to teach community members how to interact with musicians and the music. A solution was the Renegade Stage or improvisation workshop as part of the tap jam. The Renegade Stage is described on the London Tap Jam website as:

The renegade stage is an opportunity before the event starts for tap dancers to try improvisation in a group - in a more low key environment. It's a chance for every tap dancer to have a go at improvising. At 7.15pm, before the main jam gets started, Annette Walker will lead newcomers and the nervous in improvisation exercises. (London Tap Jam 2012, FAQ)



Figure 11: Community members participate in the Renegade Stage at the October Tap Jam in London.

The Renegade Stage is led by a tap jam organiser or another professional tap dancer from the community. Individuals are invited to the stage forty-five minutes prior to the start of the actual jam. The individuals form a circle and the tap dancer guides the

group through exercises selected to enhance their awareness of rhythm. An example would be stomping, alternating feet in a 4/4 time signature in crochets:

R	L	R	L
Stomp	Stomp	Stomp	Stomp
1	2	3	4

(Notation from *The Tap Dance Dictionary*, Knowles 1998: 184)

The group is given a task to execute individually around the circle while the rest of the group maintains the rhythm by stomping. A popular exercise observed at the Renegade Stage is allowing individuals to execute a selection of shuffles, a quick swinging motion with the leg that allows the toe tap to brush across the floor. The participants alternate left and right legs performed in a 4/4 time signature and focus on dividing the accents between crochets and quavers:

R	L	L	R	R
Step	Shuffle	Step	Shuffle	Touch
1	+ 2	+	3 +	4

Notation from *The Tap Dance Dictionary*. This is also referred to as the first part of a 'Shuffle Seven', Knowles 1998: 185-186).

The exercise encourages the tap dancers to experiment with how they could change the accents of the step while keeping in time with the rhythm set by the group. Participants are able to practice selecting steps to match the music at a slower pace and with the support of a group. Individuals may experiment without restrictions such as the

duration of a single song. The Renegade stage also provides community members with anecdotes and advice from the tap dancer leading the workshop:

Annette leads them through a few rhythm exercises, but mostly answers questions from the group and relates her own experiences from improvised performances...mainly explaining that in improvised performances they should 'expect to things working and not working in the performance'. (Fieldnotes 24.02.11)

The term 'Renegade Stage' was inspired by a conversation between the London Tap Jam organisers, tap dancers Murray and Walker, and a professional juggler. A Renegade Show is an open performance platform for jugglers to try new tricks and routines at juggling conventions. The event is named after the Renegade juggling company that started in California in 1981.²² The tap jam organisers saw the Renegade Show as a model to integrate into their event. It was the intention of the organisers to use the Renegade Stage as practical session to develop tap dancers' confidence in their ability to improvise without pressure or judgement from an audience.

The Renegade Stage is an example of a deviation from tap jams observed in early ethnographic reconnaissance in New York City.²³ The Renegade Stage is the only time any improvisation takes place in a circle and is the only reference to a Hoofers Circle in English tap jams. It is also the only free group improvisation occurring in the jams but it is treated as an informal workshop rather than a free improvisation. The creation of a separate workshop to the tap jam highlights the intention of the community to develop improvisational performance skills in participants.

On the Stage and in the Moment

At both fieldsites, the conclusion of the Renegade Stage signals the beginning of the actual tap jam. After a brief interval of five minutes the band starts to play and the main organiser of the jams, usually Laniyan or Murray, perform a short improvised solo. The end of the improvised solo leads into a welcoming speech to the audience in which the hosts reveal that every individual or group performance will be improvised, not choreographed. Audience and community members are urged by the hosts to cheer and clap throughout the song to provide support for performers. Audience members are also encouraged to don tap shoes and perform on stage with the musicians. At the Manchester tap jams a large bag of spare tap shoes is provided for any audience member wishing to improvise.

The order of performance is determined on the evening of the jam by the event organisers. Individuals speak with an organiser in charge of the 'set list' for the jam. This list consists of a running order for the individuals performing throughout the evening. A song list is provided for individuals to consult before speaking to the musicians:

Songs List

Jazz

Footprints 3/4
All Blues 3/4
Tenderly
Like Someone In Love
Tea for two
So what
Take 5
Work Song

Lush Life
Take the "A" Train
Yesterdays
Summertime
Sunny side of the street
Watermelon Man
Song for my Father
Caravan

Swing

My Romance
Mack the Knife
Night and day
Alfie's Theme
There will never be another you
My Baby Just Cares For Me

Satin Doll
My shining hour
Night in Tunisia

Be Bop

Oleo
Billy's Bounce
Driftin

Bossa/ Samba

Bossa 4/4
Nature Boy
Simple Samba
St Thomas
Sudden Samba
Triste

Figure 12: Programme with song list from Manchester Tap Jam May 2011

At both fieldsites the songs are organised under headings such as ‘swing’ or ‘bossa/samba’ to provide individuals with an indication of the style and tempo of the songs. Time signatures are provided next to titles to assist participants in choosing their song. The selection of songs is based on the repertoire of the band playing at the tap jams and may alter depending on which musicians are present. Observations in both fieldsites confirm that the jazz bands take requests from community members.

The bands also use the tap jams to showcase new compositions of their own. A similar practice of experimenting with new compositions occurred in English dance halls in the early twentieth century. Buckland (2013: 60) describes how orchestras would place an extra dance at the end of the evening as a way to test new compositions on the dancers: ‘the composer/bandleader could make modifications in response to the dancers’ reactions’. The feedback the bandleader received would influence which compositions would be published based on popularity. In the tap communities, the new compositions played by musicians are also experiments. The band members use the feedback from the tap dancers not only as a measure of how popular the song is but how they can adjust elements such as tempo, the number of choruses, and changes to accents. The information from tap dancers is instant in these improvisations. The musicians are able to constantly explore how to adapt their compositions based on rhythmical inspiration from the tap dancers.

The mobility of the tap dancer in the space highlighted her or his role as a soloist and a dancer for the audience. During the improvised performances of the tap jams, the dancer occupies the stage and the musicians are seated to the dancer’s right. Although

the stage is small, participants were not restricted to tapping on the spot. Dancers travelled across the stage and faced different directions. Some individuals changed levels by incorporating toe stands, jumps, or crouching down low to the floor. The constant motion of the participants marks them as a dancer which contrasts with the fixed position of the musicians. At tap jam sessions, the musicians are situated in positions that allow them to play their instrument and easily make eye-contact with one another and off stage. There is a clear distinction in roles between the moving dancer and the seated musicians. The participants perform next to the musicians and the audible sounds produced by each dancer marks them as a musicians.

Participants improvising in duets or small groups often ‘comp’ during their performance.²⁴ ‘Comping’ consists of one tap dancer executing simple steps or rhythms to complement the improvised solo of their partner. One individual stomps their feet alternating left and right in an even 4/4 time signature while their partner executes a more difficult rhythmic pattern:

Tap Dancer 1 (comping):

R	L	R	L
Stomp	Stomp	Stomp	Stomp
1	2	3	4

Tap Dancer 2 (improvised solo)

R	L	L	R	R
Step	Shuffle	Step	Shuffle	Step
1	+ 2	+	3 +	4

(Notation from *The Tap Dance Dictionary*, Knowles 1998)

Within the duet the tap dancer comping will keep a steady beat and the dancers will switch roles after four or eight bars. The act of switching often complements the structure of the song such as matching the number of bars in a verse or chorus. Comping also functions as a means for the soloist to keep time and maintain their awareness of the duration of musical bars.



Figure 13: Participants comping during the Manchester Tap Jam April 2013.

Tap jam organisers at both fieldsites used the set-list to group newcomers in groups of three or four. Individuals new to the jams find support and increase their confidence by sharing the stage with other performers. Many participants in both fieldsites admitted that they found the prospect of an improvised solo intimidating at their first tap jam. The trios and quartets of tap dancers provide each other with more rhythmic ideas to

explore instead of relying on their own repertoire. This impromptu grouping also allows as many individuals as possible the opportunity to improvise during the jam. Small groups of three to four individuals facilitate accommodating large numbers of eager tap dancers.

The emphasis during each community member's performance is rhythmical improvisation. The musicians provide accompaniment for the tap dancers and support the performers during the song. Jazz drummer M. Drees explains her role at the tap jams:

I love being there and my goal is to be the absolute best at supporting tap dance. I just want to give tap dancers the support I know they need because having stepped up on stage I know how terrifying it is (laughs) in the beginning! And that support that the tap jam...is so special because everybody is supported, no matter what level you are at, I mean that is unique, it is fantastic. And also when they get up on stage I, I of course look, it sounds a bit crazy, but I really try to engage with that person, I look at them, I smile at them, I say, "what shall we dance to? Give us a tempo". You know, and I'm looking at them all the time they're dancing...I'm just all ears and all eyes and I'm trying to respond, trying to pick up on things that they're doing and hopefully if they want to...this is an area we need to develop more at the tap jam, where people will trade fours with me a lot more. I don't think they realise that they can trade fours with the pianist, with John, trade fours with Patrick or just do a whole chorus just with Patrick, that's happened a few times, but people could be using me a lot more. I'm completely open there. They could say, 'right can we just start off with drums and tap, or could we do a whole chorus, you swing and then we'll trade eights'. But I think a lot of people aren't aware of how to trade eights and how to trade fours, about how you work out the timing, so those sorts of things I can help with. And how I can support, well I'm just here and it's growing and it's early days and...now you've asked me that question, it's making me think people aren't aware of the level of support I can give...They just have to ask and I suppose that's the thing, knowing what you need and knowing what to ask for, I mean 'cause sometimes you just don't know what to ask for. I mean, for me too, you know, learning to tap dance. (Fieldnotes: interview with M. Drees 01.07.11)

Drees is a white-British professional drummer in her mid-forties who studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. She toured with several bands

drumming a variety of music styles from Drum 'n Bass to Salsa. She participated in tap dance through a syllabus framework but quit during her adolescent years to focus on her musical career. She joined the London tap community in 2008 and became the primary drummer with her trio at the London tap jams in 2009.

Drees maintains that musicians performing at the tap jams must do so with an awareness of how to interact with tap dancers:

Because I think if we can get to a level where... you know a tap dancer does a little idea and I can pick up on that idea and embellish a bit more, change it a bit, it's a conversation. And then, I throw that back at you, and then if you can do it within that like a four bar structure or an eight bar structure each, you know, it's fantastic! You get this...it's a conversation! It's just a different...it's like the conversation we're having now. I think that, if there was more that, you know, I try and gauge it, you know. If a tap dancer does want to trade with me I can, you know, I'm aware of what level they're at. I mean, there are those dancers that come up that haven't been tap dancing that long and they've traded with me, and I keep things sort of a little bit simpler, but a little bit challenging, I try and just place it in such a way that is just going to push them a little bit and maybe they pick up on that and run with that a little bit more and it's...it's just fun! It's great fun. And they should develop that a lot more, really.
(Fieldnotes: interview with M. Drees 01.07.11)

Drees acknowledges that her improvisations as a drummer are influenced by the tap dancer. Her ability to distinguish the level confidence of each performer allows her to select rhythms to support the musicality of the performer. She claims that matching her rhythmic patterns to the tap dancer's vocabulary improves their development as improvisers. The frequent exchanges with musicians such as Drees enables the participants to understand how they can adapt their tap steps to create more complex rhythms within a song.

Individuals from the Manchester tap community (Focus Group interview, Manchester 22.10.10) describe the freedom and encouragement they experience ‘jamming’ with the jazz musicians as, ‘it’s all about improvisation...improvisation of your feet as a musical instrument, along with other musicians’. Drees (Fieldnotes, interview with M. Drees 01.07.11) compares the tap jams to jazz jams stating, ‘that is what jam sessions should be all about, you know, the early jam sessions I went to as a jazz player, everybody supported me and everybody encouraged me’. American ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner (1994: 42) describes jazz jam sessions as ‘informal musical get-togethers, [where] improvisers are free of the constraints that commercial engagements place upon repertory’. Drees maintains it is the absence of direction and choreography that gives all tap dancers and musicians the freedom to engage in an improvised dialogue on stage:

I think you’re developing your language, it’s having a conversation, it’s um, it’s developing ideas, it’s how you communicate, it’s fun, it’s exciting, um, it’s lovely...I don’t know! Um...why is it important? Because you can develop rhythmic ideas; and it’s instant it’s happening in the moment. It’s that, it’s getting to that place at that moment, where I said something and if you’ve listened to me you’re gonna come back with an answer for that...and the ideas are just flowing and bouncing off each other all the time and...and that’s jazz. That’s music. That’s...lovely. And then I’m gonna listen to you and come back with something slightly different, you know, and it’s a conversation. And that’s what it is, it’s a conversation and if you’re really listening to each other, it can be so much fun. And I think that’s what music is, it’s communicating and I mean, if you’re a tap dancer you’re a musician, you’re a percussionist. (Fieldnotes, interview with M. Drees 01.07.11)

The tap dancers use the improvised performances at jams to hone their ability to respond to the music creatively and honestly. The tap dancers learn to choose steps instantly as there is no time to think through choreography or worry about meeting exam criteria. Similar to jazz jam sessions, the vocabulary which each participant uses is not constrained by commercial requirements for entertainment. The rhythmic

responses become the ‘language’ described by Drees and are unique to each performer and every tap jam.

Mercy, Mercy, Mercy and the Shim Sham

The tap jams in both communities conclude with an improvised group piece. The participants perform brief improvised solos during a single song selected by the jam organisers. The final sharing features the range of improvisational abilities of the tap dancers and allows the audience another chance to support the performers:

Junior and Will finish their number and Junior calls “everyone with shoes” to the stage. The trio start playing ‘Mercy, Mercy, Mercy’ and Junior launches into a short solo with quick shuffles and heel drops.²⁵ He indicates to Annette and she takes his place on stage as he moves into the alcove space behind the stage. He continues to direct performers on and off the stage as each individual takes a short solo. Will, Roxanne, and Junior are all watching from the alcove in the back...This ending number really is a fantastic format to display the entire spectrum of people attending the event: a broad range of ages, gender, ability, body type, ethnicities, and confidence of performer passes through the performance space in the span of about eight minutes. The entire audience is so supportive throughout the song; everyone is watching and cheering at the end of each solo. Roxanne and Will leave the alcove and come onstage to tap together. Junior joins them and they end the song with each one punctuating the final note in their own way: Junior with a jump, Roxanne a turn, and Will with a slap of the foot. The band starts to play again and Junior grabs the microphone and thanks the tap dancers and the musicians for their performances tonight. Meanwhile, Will has gone back in the alcove and walks around to the drummer’s right side and picks up a pair of sticks and starts beating away at the drums he’s not playing, closing his eyes and getting lost in the rhythm. Throughout the audience, people started gathering up coats and bags and heading for the door; it is just past eleven o’clock at night... Junior gestures to Will and he puts down the drum sticks and joins him onstage and they sing the last bars of the song together as it ends. Junior invites all dancers back to the stage and somehow about twenty-five people crowd onto the stage and all do the Shim Sham Shimmy together. The band builds to a crescendo and the tappers all finish the last step to a huge cheer from the audience. (Fieldnotes 22.03.09)

The practice of calling all performers to the stage allows the individual performers one more opportunity to improvise with the trio. All performers have equal solo time regardless of their level of tap improvisation experience. The succession of improvised solos acknowledges that every participant actively contributed to the entire evening of music and dance performance.

My observations at both fieldsites demonstrated that even a short exposure to the practice of improvisation in performance increases an individual's confidence. Tap dancers unsure of performing their initial solo or small group improvisation often have to be gestured off the stage by a tap jam organiser during the final group performance. The enthusiasm of participants manifests as their reluctance to leave the stage. The final group improvisation demonstrates how the tap jams in England celebrate the diversity of community members.

Summary

Each individual determines the level of their engagement in the tap communities and identifies tap improvisation as the act of belonging to the community. The tap jams exist as an open performance platform for the community members to explore improvisation together and to share these musical discoveries with an audience. Improvised rhythms and steps become a form of currency between individuals, freely exchanged with the intention of improving skills. The tap dancers place value on

learning to interact with the musicians and each other in performance. Tap jam organiser Lander explains how the tap jams address the lack of opportunities for individuals to learn tap improvisation skills (Fieldnotes: interview with Melody Lander 02.06.09):

a platform for tap dancers to sort of have a go at improvising and dancing with a live band, which people didn't have. I mean, practically at all, there was no access, I don't think anyone was dancing with live musicians, let alone improvising with live musicians... basically, it gives a practice, you know, everyone is able to improvise and practice every time with a band. I mean, obviously, we don't necessarily see it as practice as you're actually performing, but basically everyone and everyone will say this from the first jam we've had til now, has improved so much. And that wouldn't...we wouldn't be improvising the way we are now if it wasn't for the jam.

The improvised music and tap dance create an alternative performance paradigm. The tap jam is not perceived as a passive performance but an active space for individuals to develop through improvisation and engagement with community members, audience, and musicians. When viewed through a symbolic interactionist framework, analysing membership of the tap communities and tap jams reveals that the act of improvisation becomes more than just a performance tool.

Notes:

¹ The Office for National Statistics (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/mro/news-release/census-result-shows-increase-in-population-of-london-as-it-tops-8-million/censuslondonnr0712.html>, accessed 28.02.14) listed the population of London as 8.2 million as of the 27th of March 2011. The 2011 Census figure for Greater Manchester was 2,682,500 (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/business-transparency/freedom-of-information/what-can-i-request/previous-foi-requests/population/greater-manchester-population-and-religion/index.html>, accessed 28.02.14).

² Participants held a range of educational qualifications. Many participants were still students completing their undergraduate or graduate degrees. Dan Sheridan is listed as having a PhD in Computer Science (<http://www.londontapjam.org/people/about-the-team>, accessed 28.02.14). Other participants did not complete degrees in Higher or Further Education.

³ Participants discussed how training with organisations such as the ISTD focussed on pre-recorded music for classes. I analyse their responses in more detail in Chapters Five and Six.

⁴ Questionnaires were distributed in both London and Manchester communities, each time at a community event such as a tap jam or master class. Of the twenty regular participants in Manchester and eighty individuals in London, the results represent approximately ten percent of the typical attendance at a London tap jam and approximately thirty percent of the Manchester community. The questionnaires reveal that in both communities, more women are in attendance than men, with seventy percent in the London community and eighty percent in the Manchester community. In both communities, the age of the participants span from sixteen to over sixty-five; the twenty-five to thirty-four year old group are the most numerous, with forty percent in London and fifty percent in Manchester.

⁵ The organisers perform at each tap jam as well as facilitate the smooth running of the jams. Murray, Laniyan, and Annette Walker also teach tap technique classes that focus on improvisation in the two communities.

⁶ Participants in Manchester who had limited their engagement to attending classes and performing took on organisational and teaching responsibilities when Murray moved to Scotland.

⁷ A Manchester tap community member, Kevin, regularly attends community sponsored events in Manchester travelling from Wigan each week (Fieldnotes 10.01.09, 12.06.10).

⁸ Other Manchester community members worked as teachers or lecturers and in administrative roles for various companies.

⁹ The attendance at tap jams in 2011 and return trips in 2012 was greater than the first tap jam in March 2009 with approximately forty-five individuals at the April 2012 tap jam.

¹⁰ The sequence of the Renegade Stage workshop of either prior to the tap jam or during an interval was dependent on the amount of individuals present for each jam. During the December 2009 jam several individuals attended and expressed an interest in learning to improvise. Murray made the decision to hold the workshop during the first and second half of the jam. If few individuals attended the jams the Renegade Stage occurred prior to the jam.

¹¹ While Will Gaines was a frequent performer at the tap jams, he was considered more an honorary member and mentor instead of a regular community member.

¹² Sheridan manages the Paypal account for the tap jam and handles credit card transactions for workshops, master classes, and official London Tap Jam merchandise.

¹³ The online interactions of tap community members is discussed and analysed in further detail in Chapter Five.

¹⁴ Individuals attending Hartley's classes did not participate in any London community activities such as master classes or tap jams. Only one individual participated in Hartley's classes and attended the monthly tap jams.

¹⁵ Manchester and London both house theatres featuring tap performance in musical theatre and West End shows. Organisations such as Tap Attack offer tap technique workshops and classes across the United Kingdom. The Tap Attack website cites the formation of the company as 2006 arranges performances of youth tap dance companies such as 'Xtreme Tap' and 'Tap Attack Youth Company'. The company focuses on corporate and commercial performances. <http://www.tapattack.co.uk/default.asp> accessed 27.04.13.

¹⁶ While I could not establish an exact reason for the increased membership I believe it may be due to the location. London is more populated, ethnically, and socially diverse than Manchester.

¹⁷ See Clip 1: 'Example of 'trading eights/trading fours' between tap dancer and musician' in Appendix A.

¹⁸ The number of parts is determined by the organisers at each tap jam. Both Manchester and London tap jams usually had two parts but at some jams with higher attendance the organisers decided on three to give the band and performers more breaks.

¹⁹ The Shim Sham Shimmy is a tap routine created by Leonard Reed in 1927, Scheerer (2005).

²⁰ The 'Renegade Stage' is a free workshop available to individuals just prior to the tap jam that focuses on improvisation technique in tap dance. Individuals are also provided guidance in communicating with musicians during their improvised performances.

²¹ In April 2013 Band on the Wall (<http://contactmcr.com/whats-on/3419-sound-moves-mixed-movement-jam/>, accessed 08 February 2014) hosted a 'mixed movement' jam session featuring the Manchester tap community members and Soundmoves. The jam included movement improvisations from contemporary, Brazilian and Afro-Cuban dance styles and musicians improvising across a broad range of music genres. The event was the 'next step' in Murray's goal of interdisciplinary jam sessions.

²² The history of the event is described in an article from Juggler's World (1996): Club Renegade was a "peoples" idea, conceived and executed by The Renegade Jugglers of Santa Cruz, California. The Renegades rented stage and lighting equipment and set it "al fresco" up behind the juggling gym. The

hams came out every evening beginning at midnight to entertain ever-growing crowds. By the time Frank Olivier, Michael Marlin, Pat Hazell and Scott Meltzer closed down the cabaret Sunday morning at 2 a.m., a crowd of almost 400 enthusiastic people was gathered to drink beer and cheer them on. Tom Kidwell of Renegade explained, "We thought there should be more of an open, unpressured and festive forum for people to try their stuff. We started at midnight because we didn't want to interfere with scheduled convention activities, and because we didn't want people to feel like they had to put on a family show."

²³ I attended the Tap City Festival Boat Ride and Tap Jam in July 2008. My intention was to observe how tap jams were structured in New York City. The jams took place on a ferry boat that toured around the island of Manhattan. Two jams took place an open jam on the main deck and a jam that featured professionals on the upper deck. Both jams allowed participants to form a circle and improvise together, individually, or in pairs in the tradition of a Hoofers circle.

²⁴ See Clip 2: 'Example of comping' in Appendix A

²⁵ 'Mercy, Mercy, Mercy' (1966) was written by Joe Zawinul. The song was composed for Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley to feature on the album *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy! Live at 'The Club'*. The song is selected for the end of the tap jams because it has a structure that allows the trio to add extra choruses as needed to accommodate all of the participants.

Chapter 5 Tap Improvisation: Approaches and Processes

This chapter examines how tap improvisation is approached in American tap practice and how the tap communities are exploring alternative processes to engage in tap improvisation. Individuals in the communities revealed that their participation in additional activities served as preparation for the tap jams. Both Manchester and London tap communities offered tap technique classes. In London, an additional event called the Hoofers Lounge was available to community members. Several participants in both communities also maintained an online presence on social networking sites. These physical and digital spaces provided multiple approaches to tap improvisation outside of a performance context. The varying levels of interaction in social spaces created the opportunity for each community member to learn how to improvise and progress their individual tap practice at their own discretion.

Tap Improvisation

Tap improvisation occurs in performance, pedagogy, and composition. Authors such as Stearns and Stearns (1968), Knowles (2002), Hill (2000, 2010), and Frank (1994) describe the improvised steps performed by American tap practitioners in theatres, clubs, and films. Tap performance improvisation is frequently discussed in the tap challenge, described by Hill (2003: 90) as a ‘dynamic exchange of rhythmic ideas’. Tap

challenges are featured in performances by many American tap practitioners.¹ The spontaneity of the tap challenge must be ‘perceived’, Hill (2003: 90) maintains, to reinforce the improvised nature of the steps and to indicate to the audience that the exchange of rhythms was not rehearsed and will not be replicated. Hill states the implied spontaneity of the steps also highlights the competitive element of the tap challenge, with tap dancers striving to constantly respond to each other’s rhythmic stimulus or a referent in which

something or someone is mocking, referring to, or commenting upon. How do you refer to it? By mimicking, repeating, copying, and deforming it through the use of humor, invective, or satire. Why refer to it? To learn it, to pay respect and admiration, to own it in a different way, to put your opponent down, to gain respect; hence it is a competition. (2003: 99)

In this context, improvisation acts as performance tool for the tap dancer to instantly distinguish her or his steps from that of another performer. As Hill notes, competition is employed in the tap challenge for entertainment. The tap dancers provide the audience with a visual and aural narrative by demonstrating a command of rhythm and movement. Characters emerge as the performers are presented as rivals competing for the audience’s approval. Victory is awarded through the audience’s applause and the concession of the vanquished tap dancer unable to produce a rhythmic response to out-perform the other dancer. This could be accomplished with any creative rhythmic interpretation: increasing or decreasing tempo or volume, adding complex syncopation, or even acrobatic tricks such as flips during an accent or rest. For American tap practitioners of the early twentieth century such as John ‘Bubbles’ or Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson, improvisation in tap performance created an additional element to their performance: a reputation. These performers were known for their ability to

consistently win at ‘rhythm tap battles’ in buck and wing contests or the Hoofers Club (Hill 2010: 3). The tap dancer chooses how to respond to the music, and even trading eights with musicians contains the potential to develop into a competition. Performers reinterpret each other’s rhythms and improvise changes in dynamics or insert new musical ideas such as altering time signatures.

Tap dancers cultivate improvisation as a skill on and off the stage. Performers practice the ability to remain open and willing to reinterpret rhythms in order to produce spontaneous responses during interactions with other tap dancers. Anecdotes and biographical details of the American tap practitioners improvising together backstage at theatres or in clubs such as the Hoofers Club situate improvisation within a pedagogical process.² Listening for inspiration is the key for tap dancers. Individuals accomplish this by listening to music and practicing how they respond to the rhythms, such as creating new combinations of favourite steps to complement one instrument in the band.

Improvisation in tap dance is also valued as a composition tool. Tap practitioners may not be able to predict the responses of the musicians or tap dancers to their rhythms but these exchanges can produce ‘new materials in the moment of performance’ (Hill 2003: 99). Using improvised steps as a source for tap choreography is a practice of American tap practitioners such as the late Gregory Hines and Savion Glover, who refer to this technique as improvography.³ Improvography focusses on choreographed tap steps developed from improvisations but also allows for improvisation within the overall structure of the piece. Improvisation as a choreographic technique was encouraged for

American tap practitioners in the early twentieth century due to the lack of formal studio training and codified steps.⁴

My observations at the tap jams revealed that improvisation was not approached as a form of rivalry at the tap jams. While dynamic, improvised exchanges often occurred between participants, the competitive elements of the tap challenge existed in the form of friendly banter or simply sharing the stage between individuals:

He nods to Michele and he starts into his solo with some quick heel drops and toe digs. I look around the room again and see that a few more people have trickled into the bar, approximately fifty people are in the room, about half the number at most jams. Tigiri looks to his left where we are standing and beckons Annette onto the stage. She steps up and they go into trading eights back and forth with one another as the trio continues to play. During their exchange I had to restrain myself from shouting 'challenge' as the tap dancers do in the movie Tap; Tigiri and Annette start to 'one up' one another or 'cut' as I'd seen some tap dancers do in films or jams back home. Annette eventually steps off the stage to let Tigiri finish the song and the audience applauds as he finishes with some quick toe digs to match Michele's roll on the cymbals... Annette is standing next to me watching Vicky and I mention that I wanted to shout 'challenge' during her and Tigiri's duet and she laughs, 'that would have brought everyone to the stage!' (Fieldnotes 24.05.10)

Although one participant left the stage, it was not as an acknowledgement of the first tap dancer's superior skill. My interpretation of the improvised exchange as a challenge was influenced by my experience as an 'insider' to American tap dance practice, such as observing tap challenges in films.⁵ Annette's comment that declaring a challenge 'would have brought everyone to the stage' indicates that a tap challenge between two individuals was not a common element of the tap jams. She perceived the challenge as a group activity, open to anyone wishing to contribute to the improvised performance.

Removing the competitive elements highlights a shift in the role of improvisation in performance at the tap jams. The tap communities moved improvisation beyond the

stage and studio into multiple spaces such as social networking websites and theatre rehearsal rooms. By relocating the act of improvisation out of a performance context, the give and take between performers becomes a social process. Informal discussions and creating friendships developed from the act of improvisation as participants cultivated their confidence and skills. Each individual engaging in tap improvisation as a social process can determine what meanings she or he derives from interactions within their own temporality. The exchanges are not always dependent on information shared in the moment but can extend into timeframes determined by the individual.

Tap Classes: Changing Focus

The shift from mastery of the tap steps for examination to the tap dancer's individual interpretation of rhythm at the tap jams raised the question of how participants learned to improvise. Many of the participants I interviewed discussed their unfamiliarity with improvising tap steps and viewed the technique classes as a means to develop their ability to improvise. The technique classes approached tap improvisation as a form of music and movement composition.

Both Manchester and London tap communities provided regular technique classes for participants. Classes were hosted weekly at Band on the Wall in Manchester and Pineapple Dance Studio in London. The classes ran one hour to one and a half hours in duration and were taught by organisers of the tap jams in each community.⁶ Tap classes

offered in both communities focussed on enhancing the knowledge of tap vocabulary through rhythmic awareness and interpretation. Individuals learned steps and short choreographed routines:

We learn the next step and repeat the entire combination several times from the beginning. After about ten minutes Junior stops us when he realizes the class as a whole is not quite getting the last part of the last step, the cramp roll into a scuff. He tells the class not to worry about getting the step perfectly today. He explains that 'training' our feet is different than 'training our brain', saying that our brain may hear the rhythm but our feet are not coordinated enough to properly execute the step...it's also about muscle memory. Junior encourages the class by saying, 'once you get that step in your feet then you can move on to the next one. (Fieldnotes 01.05.10)

The technique classes incorporated multiple methods to ensure participants increased their awareness of rhythm such as call and response. The instructor tapped out a step or rhythm as the call and the class will respond by copying the rhythm to the best of their ability. The call and response was repeated until the instructor is satisfied with the participants' ability to recall the step. Call and response was not accompanied by verbal instructions, the individuals had to rely on listening skills alone to learn the step. Emphasis was placed on learning the rhythm of the step as opposed to visually recognising the movements of the step:

At one point he asks us to turn and face the back so that we can do the call and response without watching him to 'work on our listening' skills with the rhythms. He stresses that there is no exact way to copy him he just wants us to reproduce the rhythms. It was interesting because I could actually hear individual steps such as shuffles and flaps. (Fieldnotes 22.05.10)

Technique classes also included improvisation games. The games did not require participants to tap dance but work to further increase the participant's musicality:

She then stops us and asks us to get into partners. She has one partner clap hands in a big in and outward horizontal motion on the down beat in 4/4 time in bars of 4. She then asks the other partner to clap in a vertical motion in between the hands of their partner on the off-beat. Jess tells us that it is a children's game, but that it is good for us to find the down beat. In partners we have to count together out loud and try to increase the speed. She gives us a few minutes to experiment together and then goes around the room and asks each group to demonstrate. Lots of giggling followed and she asked us to do it again a second time, but that this time the partner doing the off beats must try different rhythms and patterns but still stay in time and in between their partners hands. She gave us a minute to try it in our partners before moving on. She explains that this is like drumming and that a tap dancer has to be aware of where the down beat is all the time so they don't get lost. (Fieldnotes 05.10.09)

Incorporating improvisation into the technique classes ensured that community members became more confident in their ability to improvise with the tap steps and initiate more complex rhythms in performances at the tap jams. Individuals were not provided with glossary of steps to master and were often encouraged to improvise freely:

She showed us how we could add extra heel toes at the beginning change the accents or change the tempo to improvise. She then taught us a paddle and roll combination that repeated three times right, left, right, and then asked us to improvise for the last eight counts. During this time Jess put on a song and asked us to improvise and do the combination for the entire song. (Fieldnotes 12.01.09)

The tap technique classes were not structured around strict progression and did not provide uniform standards to measure individual development. Similar to Irish step dancing, the community members engaged with parameters such as timing and learning steps to enhance their performance but no assessment or competition existed in the tap technique classes.⁷ There was an atmosphere of camaraderie between community members.

Many participants regarded the technique classes as preparation for their improvised performance at tap jams. Observations from a Manchester rhythm tap class revealed how exercises equipped individuals with skills for interacting with other tap dancers during improvisation at tap jams:

Jess then asks us to gather in a circle and tells us in preparation for the upcoming jam we are coming to do some 'comping'. She explains that this is a form of accompanying each other during tap solos. She asks Julie to come out to the centre of the circle and do a short improvised solo for four bars of four. Jess comes out into the circle with her and faced her and as Julie does a series of flaps and shuffles, Jess does short syncopated steps and flaps to 'match her rhythms' she told us. She explains that we will each take turns around the circle 'trading fours' with one person soloing and the other 'comping'. She asks us all to count the bars so each person knows when to either 'switch' roles or come into the circle. Jess counts the group in and she and Julie start again in the same roles and we go around the circle. Although many in the group are tapping heels or stomping their feet, Jess and I are the only ones counting the bars out loud. Watching the group, the first time 'around' the circle or the first sequence of everyone taking a turn, the solos are quite simple and kept well within the downbeat. As the group relaxes into the pattern of 'comping' and switching roles back and forth, the solos slowly become more complex and the vocabulary of the dancers begins to expand, including steps such as pull backs, cramp rolls, and toe digs. After about 5 times around the circle, Jess stops us and asks the group if we think four bars is 'enough', meaning enough time to really explore the rhythm. No one in the group really answers her back so she volunteers that eight bars would be better because it would be longer to explore the rhythms. She turns and walks over to the CD player and selects a track 'with a clear structure' she tells us. It is 'A Song for My Father' and she asks us to listen and count the bars out loud. It is a very clear rhythmical structure with six bars of similar rhythm and the last two bars a 'break' or change in the pattern as she describes it. We do the same exercise again around the circle and this time the 'comping' as well as the solos are more complex. The dancers begins to experiment with steps other than just simple flaps or stomps to accompany the soloist in the circle, including slides, cramp rolls, and shuffles as their choices to highlight the rhythms of the soloist. After a few cycles around the group Jess congratulates us on 'keeping up' with one another and picking 'interesting choices' in our rhythms. She then asks us the best way to 'know' what the other person is doing in performance. When no one in the room replies she tells us it's actually making eye contact with them and not watching their feet. 'You can always listen to their feet', she says, 'you don't have to be watching their feet to know hear what they are doing'. She asks us to think about it and try it next time we do the exercise. She explains this is really helpful in a jam and especially when working with live musicians in a jam. (Fieldnotes 11.09.09)

The technique classes also focussed on the musical structure of jazz standards, including discussions on how songs follow an AABA pattern in their arrangement of choruses and

verses. Knowledge of the song structure enabled community members to determine how their steps may match the changing tempos and rhythmic structures of the choruses or verses. Developing an awareness of the musical arrangements and roles of each instrument created an understanding of how the tap dancer interacted with musicians and contributed to the overall composition of the song as a musician. The exercise of improvising with song structures was a frequent feature of the technique classes. Murray maintained the repetition of working compositional structures would develop each participants listening skills until it became a 'habit' (Fieldnotes 11.09.09). Dance practitioner and scholar Cynthia Novack describes a similar approach to how dancers learning contact improvisation will practice skills to establish habits in movement:

Some teachers have students practice particular skills as a way of establishing habits of movement which they might then be utilized in dancing; others teach the state of awareness they think the form requires and simply let people dance and test movement in the process. (1990: 154)

The tap technique classes did provide community members with habits and awareness but within the context of musicality and rhythm in sound production. Individuals focussed on aural skills and develop their movement habits in response to the sounds they generated. Unlike contact improvisation they do not rely on tactile information received through physical interaction with another dancer. The participants viewed the acquisition of movement and music composition skills as a means of artistic expression to communicate their ideas and represent their rhythmic personality.

Although the tap technique classes were led by one of the jam organisers, emphasis was not placed on a strict teacher and student relationship. Participants improvised with the

organisers and each other in each session. Individuals did comment that the willingness of the organisers to improvise directly with them did not reflect the clear boundaries of student and teacher from their syllabus classes. During the improvisation exercises the organisers shared steps with individuals as they would with any other tap dancer. These interactions focussed on learning how to exchange rhythmic ideas in a non-competitive atmosphere. Call-and-response exchanges did not involve trying to out-perform one another, as in a tap challenge, and were often accompanied by an informal group discussion about the experience of improvising. The discussions in the studio often carried on outside of the classes as individuals met in social spaces such as bars and pubs. Improvisation became a stimulus for self and group reflection in the technique classes that allowed individuals to incorporate tap dance into the process of socialising with one another beyond the studio.

The Hoofers Lounge

The tap technique classes provided a structured studio setting for the participants to learn improvisation skills but these sessions did not fully capture the environment of the tap jams. In the London tap community, organisers created an event that facilitated participants in learning how to explore rhythm in situations requiring them to interact with musicians. The Hoofers Lounge was a monthly event held at the Pleasance Theatre in central London.⁸ Community members congregated on the second Tuesday every month in a small room equipped with a portable wooden tap floor and piano. The

event was an informal workshop organised by Sheridan, Lander, and Laniyan.

Members of the London tap community were invited to participate and any musician, regardless of whether they participate in the tap jams, were welcome. At the Hoofers Lounge, individuals had the opportunity to practice improvising with live music but without an audience present. Drummer Drees, who usually performs at the tap jams, was present every month. The event usually lasted two to three hours and consisted of members improvising tap solos or small groups to live music from the musicians. The event is described by its Facebook page as:

Our purpose: 1. This is our forum to trade ideas and steps; 2. Hoofers and musicians will be able to practice improvisation without an audience; 3. Hoofers will be able to socialize with other tap dancers and musicians. There is a bar on the premises so there is always the option to relax and chat in another space; 4. Hoofers and musicians will have access to each other. (Laniyan 2010)

Without an audience present, the Hoofers Lounge was a space for the community members to experiment with their rhythms and engage the musicians at their own pace and without the pressure of time limitation of the tap jam. Laniyan explained his perception of how community members benefit from the event:

An important element of the lounge, and also one of the key differences between the Lounge and London Tap Jam (shameless advertising, I know:-) is that we have a space that isn't so much for performance as it is for people to feel they can try ideas. 1. It's too easy to just play with all available musicians but by limiting choice, before we start playing we are already in that creative space where we're contemplating the sound off [sic] our work. 2a. If we all learn from each other, we need to approach our work as equals. So when we play together, the tap dancer should know how to play as a member of the band, being aware of where they are in the form, knowing when to solo and being aware of the other musician etc. (Fieldnotes 15.09.09)

The name is derived from the Hoofers Club located in Harlem during the 1930's and 1940's. Selecting the term 'hooper' created an association with rhythm tap.⁹ The term 'lounge' suggested the event was casual with the connotation of a room located in the home as opposed to a formal theatre. In this informal environment, community members questioned each other about tips on steps. Participants had a longer period to discuss performance options with the band, such as tempo, number of choruses, or trading with musicians:

Michele asks if she wants to 'trade 4s' with her. Miriam said she didn't know, and Michele goes on to explain that she does a bar of four counts and then Miriam would tap for a bar of four counts. Miriam says she'll try and Michele counts the trio in. The pianist and guitarist play a simple tune, one I don't recognize, and after a chorus of Miriam tapping on her own, Michele signals her to start. Miriam does a step and the band pull back and Michele plays a quick rhythm. The exchange goes back and forth, with Miriam trying to do two bars or 8 counts instead of 1 bar of four, but after a few back and forth exchanges she cuts it down to just 1 bar. After a few more, she starts to listen and mimic Michelle's rhythm patterns. They continue on for about a minute before Melody signals Michele who nods and signals the band and they go back to the main chorus to finish. At the end of the song Michele congratulates Miriam on the 'trading'. Miriam is huffing and very red in the face and decides to sit down, wiping the sweat from her brow with the back of her hand. She plops into one of the plastic chairs next to me with a huge grin on her face. (Fieldnotes 13.04.10)

The process Miriam undertook of gradually learning how to trade fours is one she would not have gained in a structured classroom setting. At the tap jams the brevity of the performances encourages individuals to learn as much as possible from only a single viewing, but does not allow enough time for reflection after the improvisations. At the Hoofers Lounge the participants shared their experiences immediately with other community members, creating the 'access to each other' that Laniyan describes in the group's Facebook page.

The Hoofers Lounge did not utilise a glossary of steps for individuals to learn, or follow the format of a technique class with a group warm-up or cool down. The evening lacked the organisation of the tap jams and did not force a running order on the individuals or limit the songs to the set list of the band. Each individual decided how often and when they will perform. Community members utilised the openness of the event to learn as much as they want to from one another:

The older gentleman gets up and speaks to the band briefly before they launch into a song and he starts. He begins with some quick shuffles and then goes into some heel drops. Next to me, Miriam is watching closely and soon gets up and makes her way over to the alcove to watch him tap, often trying to mimic a few of his steps and rhythms. Her intense focus reminds me of what it must have been like to have children back stage, like the Hines brothers, at a performance at the Apollo or Lafayette theatres trying to pick up steps from other hoofers...The older gentleman finishes and sits back down and Miriam goes over to him and starts asking him about some of the steps he did. He shows her a few while he is sitting down and she attempts to execute them correctly based on his demonstration and description. When Miriam asks him about a particular step she can't get and its name he tells her, 'I'm not doing it consciously so I can't really say what it (the step) is called'. Miriam thanks him and walks back to her chair where she picks up some paper and starts making notes about the steps. (Fieldnotes 13.04.10)

Miriam directly approached another community member to discuss his improvisation. The performance atmosphere of Ronnie Scott's was not always conducive to the depth of discussion and demonstration that she experienced at the Hoofers Lounge. During my fieldwork I observed Miriam speaking to other community members at the London tap jam. Her interactions were limited to commenting on an individual's performance and did not include an in depth exchange of steps and techniques.

At the Hoofers Lounge the emphasis was on trying out rhythmic ideas with the musicians. Although many community members trained in tap dance prior to their participation in the tap jams, few expressed a familiarity with jazz composition

conventions. Learning how to interpret time signatures, knowledge of chorus and verse structures, and an awareness of how to change tempo are all skills individuals explore and develop at the Hoofers Lounge. Developing complete proficiency in jazz music was not the primary goal of the community members at the event. The individual tap dancer determined their own progression as a performer and this included how they utilised musical knowledge in future performances. Berliner echoes a similar approach in the jazz communities:

the young artists' self-awareness illuminate fundamental areas of the jazz community's musical life and artistry. Emerging improvisers, in coming to terms with jazz's varied conventions, do not simply absorb them. Rather, they interpret and select them according to personal abilities and values, formative musical experience and training, and dynamic interaction with other artists. Ultimately, each player cultivates a unique vision that accommodates change from within and without. It is clear, then, that from the outset an artist's ongoing personal performance history entwines with jazz's artistic tradition, allowing for a mutual absorption and exchange of ideas. These processes – and the complementary themes of shared community values and idiosyncratic musical perspectives – are already evident in the lives of learners soon after they begin to acquire knowledge of those formal structures of jazz on which their own performances will depend. (1994: 59)

The participants viewed the events as another element that developed their individual tap practice. Each individual interpreted her or his evolving musical knowledge for their own artistic development.

The Hoofers Lounge was not open to the public and it allowed participants to engage in improvisation in a social environment. The interactions between tap dancers and musicians were supplemented by informal discussions about steps, rhythms, and ways to communicate more effectively during a performance. Participants were encouraged to stop and engage in a conversation by the organisers, such as debating approaches to singing and improvisation:

Junior looks up as Miriam sits down and asks her the name of the film 'The Man I Love' was from. She tells him, and I promptly forget to write it down, as I'm busy scribbling notes about our improvisation. Miriam says she often sings in public and tells Junior she'd like to sing at the tap jam sometime if it is 'ok to sing at the jam'. Junior nods and says, 'yeah' and tells her about another woman who used to come to the jams to sing almost every month. Miriam explains that she feels she has to ask because, 'you can't really improvise with singing can you?' Dan raises his eyebrows and Melody looks to Junior who replies, 'yeah, you can always scat'. Miriam smiles and tries scatting a few lines as we all look on. 'Oh I can't,' she tells us, 'I feel it's an insult to the composer'. Junior shakes his head and disagrees. 'The nice thing about the jams is that they happen quite organically' and he goes on to explain that some people get up to sing and start trading with the band and scatting the same way tap dancers do. (Fieldnotes 11.05.10)

This interaction between the participants allowed tap dance to be shared as a form of verbal give and take in a conversation, creating a social rather than performance-based approach to tap improvisation. Exchanging ideas about rhythm and tap performance is part of the process for participants to evolve their own tap practice and contributes to their understanding of the dance form. The conversations of the Hoofers Lounge highlighted how community members were exploring tap improvisation beyond the stage.

Tap Dance Online: Social Networking Sites and Improvisation

Many participants also included tap improvisation as part of their social activities outside of the community. Individuals shared tap practice in both physical and virtual social spaces, engaging in online discussions on tap dance that reflected the prolonged conversations of the Hoofers Lounge. The social networking sites served as another

means to access tap practice without being physically present at the tap jams or classes. Tap practice became mobile and instantly accessible.

The two communities each developed a Facebook page as a means to communicate events such as the Hoofers Lounge and tap jams. Individuals participated in online discussions and shared tap related video clips, text, and images. The option of commenting on posts or updates created by individuals of the community enabled me to comment back and was another option of instigating discussion among community members. Instant chat and messaging options facilitated communication between individuals and myself to occur on more relaxed and convenient terms for both the informant and researcher. Evidence of the events, such as the tap jam, were available in the format of digital photographs and online video clips. The digital material created additional reflection after the tap jams and alternative perspectives that I missed in my observations.¹⁰ In order to generate a complete understanding of the tap community members' experience, their inclusion of tap dance into their social networking sites warranted consideration. Of the 192 Facebook Screen Captures documented in the investigation, thirty-two percent of the screen captures are records of conversations with community members.¹¹ Twenty-nine percent are sharing Youtube videos, seventeen percent of which feature past practitioners. Twenty-one percent are of community members discussing tap practices e.g. steps, styles, music, and personal progress. Only fifteen percent share videos and photos of tap jams, two percent highlight participants discussing tap floors, and only one percent advertised other tap events outside of the two communities.

Several of the community members in both Manchester and London also subscribed or 'liked' the Tap Legacy Foundation, Inc. website page on Facebook.¹² Participants visited the website and began posting favourite video clips on their designated Facebook profile. Sharing Youtube tap video clips on Facebook reflected the physical act of travelling to the theatre to watch tap performance.¹³ Uploading and sharing these performances on social media sites acted as a digital parallel to the theatres. While direct transmission from performer to performer through physical proximity was not always feasible, social networking sites allowed for tap practice to occur through a digital web of connections rather than a chronological or linear transmission.

The Facebook pages of the community members became a digital document highlighting the rhythmic influences they valued in their own performance practice. The inclusion clips of American practitioners implied that individuals of the English tap communities are inspired to look outside their own borders to stimulate their personal tap performance. They were presented with multiple options to incorporate into their own practice instead of recalling predetermined tap combinations for examination and progression. As dance scholars Avanthi Meduri (2004: 16-17) and Halifu Osumare (2007: 176) suggest, the incorporation of practices from outside of an individual's physical location may enhance their own experience of improvising within the dance form.

Screen captures showed tap dancers in the London community sharing rhythmic exercises to improve their personal practice. One example was a musical exercise for percussionist that focused on repetition by varying divisions of notes, such as quavers

and crotchets, incorporating a rapid switch between the right and left hands. The purpose of the exercise is to promote speed and accuracy. The screen capture demonstrated how the tap dancers took a drumming exercise and sought similarities with past tap practitioners. They referenced Steve Condos, an American tap dancer known for his fast and repetitive heel drops in his improvised performances. This was an exercise usually situated in a dance studio but when located in digital space it allowed individuals to reflect on their practice and progress for an indeterminate period of time. Participants described how they could return to the exercise and review their progress on their own time instead of during a designated class or workshop.

Activity on Facebook also highlighted how individuals shared their personal progress developing as tap dancers. One screen capture revealed a woman in the London tap community discussing how she utilised a DVD to learn the BS Chorus and explored the rhythms and steps in her improvised practice.¹⁴ A comment posted by another individual in the community asked to see footage of her improvisations. The woman replied that she had not recorded any footage yet but would post it soon, implying that this was a frequent exchange between the two individuals.

Individuals within both communities also utilised social networking sites as platforms to increase their own knowledge of the history of tap dance. A screen capture from individuals in the London community contained commentary on Constance Valis Hill's (2010) latest book *Tap Dancing America: a Cultural History*. The individuals described how they purchased the book due to a recommendation of another community member. The subsequent thread generated by their discussion revealed how their

understanding of the dance form was supplemented by their engagement with the literature and the opportunity to comment on each other's opinions. Although the individuals interacted with other groups on their Facebook page regarding popular literature, the fact they chose to include tap dance as a topic for an online discussion suggests that they value the dance form equally to other hobbies and interests.

Social networking sites such as Facebook also provided access to other tap communities and opportunities to scrutinize tap practices in other locations and develop potential collaborations on a global scale. One screen capture featured performers in Washington D.C. in the United States engaging in improvised exchanges of tap steps and rhythms. Another screen capture revealed how an organiser of the London tap jams travelled to Japan to perform with the local communities. He shared his performance with individuals of the London tap community in video footage uploaded to his individual Facebook page. Community members witnessed practices in other tap communities across the globe and discussed potential adaptation or integration into their own practice. Osumare describes a similar collaboration with hip-hop dancers utilising the Internet to generate networks and connect with other dance communities:

hip-hop communities of b-boy and b-girl collectives, graffiti crews, and hip-hop life-style zines, are connecting around the world. Annual b-boy competitions in Japan, Germany, and New York, as examples, are organized to a great extent through e-mail and the Internet, with websites substituting as physical international centers. The hip-hop communities throughout the large continent of Africa, as another example, are united by Africanhiphop.com that fosters collaborations across nations, ethnic groups, and longtime tribal disunity, allowing emcees in South Africa, Senegal, Nigeria, and Kenya to be aware of each other's projects. Blogs, as new form of information and opinion sharing, can also facilitate this process. The resulting social dialectic created among the U.S. hip-hop originators and hip-hop local sites internationally are projected onto the Web via various e-zines. (2007: 177)

Individuals in both Manchester and London communities shared practice and information about the dance form digitally with each other and tap communities in Europe and the United States. Musicians and performers contacted individuals in the communities to discuss creative ideas and possible performances. Community members starting new tap projects and rhythm tap classes relied on the original Facebook pages to inform the community members of their activities.¹⁵ Individuals monitored the progress of new projects and performances as they arose and utilised the group pages as a site for discussion and feedback.

The online activities of community members raised questions of the effectiveness of tap practice in a digital environment. The elimination of the physical proximity of dancers or musicians impacts on an individual's experience of learning and performing. An atmosphere created by live music and tap performance is represented in digital video but may not be fully replicated depending on the quality of presentation. Sound and movement may be distorted or delayed due to poor equipment, especially in older recordings of tap performance. Analysis of improvised performances is hindered by inadequate filming techniques, such as obstructed views or dim lighting in the venue. Digital collaborative performances of tap dancers and musicians in different geographic locations may not achieve a desired level of spontaneous composition if instant aural and visual contact is not established.

In considering the various complications of digital performance practices, it appears the community members do not rely on social networking sites as a primary method for practicing tap dance. The information shared in this format does not adhere to a set

temporality as in live performance. Digital interactions between participants can occur over hours, days, months, or remain ongoing. Participants revealed that their online interactions supplemented their improvised performances at tap jams or in community-sponsored technique classes and reinforced a sense of belonging to the community. Fogarty describes a similar occurrence in the mediated exchanges of b-boy and b-girl communities:

mediation can provide an avenue to belonging that overcomes the limitations of some social groups. Yet activities and skills gained through a removed, mediated encounter can lead to eventual acceptance in live encounters. (2012: 461)

Sharing videos and photos of performances at tap jams also demonstrated an individual's participation to non-community members without requiring their presence as confirmation. The tap dancers can share their rhythmic discoveries and personal journeys with other tap communities. The exchange of music and movement ideas that occur at the tap jams transcended physical spaces and boundaries in a digital environment. Through these online exchanges between community members, tap improvisation acts a social exchange of embodied knowledge in a disembodied space.

Summary

The evolving practices of technique classes, the Hoofers Lounge, and an online presence of the tap communities demonstrated how tap dance improvisation was practiced and performed outside of a theatrical context. The technique classes equipped

community members with skills to explore rhythmic patterns through steps and learned combinations. The Hoofers Lounge enables individuals to communicate with musicians through improvised exchanges. The online digital presence of the tap communities allows participants to customise and share their experience of tap dance while confirming their sense of belonging. Examining how the two tap communities approach improvisation as both a social process and a form of musical composition demonstrates that improvisation in tap dance is embracing new contexts in England.

Notes:

¹ See Chapter Two on the history of tap challenges and the role they played in the evolution of American tap practice and tap jams.

² Examples of these approaches are present in the works of Hill (2010), Knowles (2002), and Stearns (1968). I discussed these examples in Chapter Two.

³ Glover created a show called *Improvography* (2003) that featured a combination of his choreography and improvised exchanges with a five piece jazz band (Hill 2010: 332).

⁴ I discuss the early training of American tap practitioners in Chapter Two.

⁵ *Tap* (1989) features an extended scene in which experienced tap dancers challenge one another and encourage Gregory Hines to prove himself by improvising tap steps with his mentor, played by Sammy Davis Jr.

⁶ On occasion when the organiser is unable to teach a class, another member from the community will lead the class in her or his absence. There does not appear to be any criteria for selecting a community member to cover the class other than willingness and availability.

⁷ Foley (2010: 57) describes how Irish step-dancers train and perform in competitions must learn, 'their particular step dance choreographies within specific conceptual and aesthetic parameters: parameters which are taught within the dance classroom context and which are assessed in competition; these parameters include concepts of timing, execution, carriage and steps'.

⁸ The Hoofers Lounge is an event specific to the London tap community. The Manchester community organised regular rhythm tap classes and tap jams each term but the participants stated their limited numbers did not necessitate a monthly event in addition to the tap jams.

⁹ The term 'hoofing' describes buck and wing, flat-footed style of tap dance popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hill 2010: 55). The term is also associated with a group of professional practitioners called the Hoofers (Hill 2010: 220-221). The group consisted of Lon Chaney, Chuck Green, and James Buster Brown. The tap dancers performed improvised rhythm tap and were featured in the documentary *Tap Dancin'* (1980).

¹⁰ Individuals in this ethnographic investigation gave consent for their contributions on Facebook to be used in this research.

¹¹ This included arranging interviews and confirming their attendance at the tap jams.

¹² The Tap Legacy Foundation, Inc. (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/taplegacy?fref=ts>, accessed 13 February 2013) promotes the history of the dance form through exhibitions, digital archives, and film screenings in New York City and around the United States.

¹³ In a practice that parallels the Hoofers Club in New York City, the participants in the two communities drew influences from individual tap practitioners but were not replicating their performances.

¹⁴Knowles (1998: 31) describes the BS Chorus as 'a traditional vaudeville routine performed by a chorus which combined tap and non-tap and was generally used as a background for tap soloists. The dance earned its name from the relative simplicity of the steps'.

¹⁵ Several members from the London tap community announced in 2013 the formation of their new tap group Pulse Collective. The posts on the London tap community Facebook page directed participants to their own Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePulseCollective> (accessed 10 February 2014) The Pulse Collective also posted digital photos and videos from their performances at the jams and in national dance competitions.

Chapter 6 Improvisation, Interaction, and Identity

When examining the act of improvisation as a form of social interaction rather than a performance activity, I realised that the performance of the community members was more than just a presentation of technical skills. The interactions generated in a dance studio are confined within assigned roles such as teacher and student but engaging in improvisation within a social context enabled tap community members to develop meaning from their interactions with other individuals. The participants chose to improvise at the tap jams because meanings in these social spaces contribute to individualised music and movement exploration.

Symbolic interactionism considers the meanings created through individuals interacting with one another. Herbert Blumer (1986: 5) defines symbolic interactionism as ‘meaning as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact’. Blumer explains how interactions between individuals function as a site for the exchange of meaning from social situations:

meaning arising in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. (1986: 4)

The experience of discovering new rhythms and variations of steps during a single song created meaning for the tap dancers in the form of an exchange of ideas. Blumer’s description of meaning achieved through interaction reflects the improvisation process

of the tap dancer as she or he interacts with the musicians, tap dancers, and audience at the tap jams:

interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings. The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly, interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action. It is necessary to see that meanings play their part in action through a process of self-interaction. (1986: 5)

The rhythms each participant hears in the music hold meaning for the tap dancer and she or he selects steps to highlight these sounds. Individuals will adjust the selection of steps based on how they interpret the music in each moment. Improvisation is a ‘formative process’ as it requires the tap dancer to constantly shift their actions according to how the musical ideas are heard and processed in their performance. Many of the participants describe experiencing these exchanges as the ability to ‘express themselves’ through the music.

In this chapter I examine what meanings are created through the community members’ interactions during improvised performances at the tap jams using a symbolic interactionist perspective. The focus is on the improvisations between community members with musicians, other tap dancers, and audience members as each interaction contributes different elements to the participants’ performance experience. I also consider the impact of globalisation on tap practice by exploring how the meanings produced through improvisation are re-interpreted as the practice of the tap jam is shared across international borders.

Parameters of Analysis

The symbolic interactionist approach allows researchers to understand how music and dance content in social interactions shapes the movement choices of dancers. Langnes and Fasting (2014: 7) focus on how breakers develop and evaluate each other's performance through the values set by a subculture. Their study revealed that 'through social interaction with breakers nationally and internationally, the breakers in Oslo make use of the very same culture that acts upon them to shape their thoughts, emotions and actions' (Langnes and Fasting 2014: 3). Langnes and Fasting's symbolic interactionist framework facilitated the study of how the breakers selected certain moves to create an identity that signified both an individual style and belonging to a group:

Style constitutes the collective group identity by signifying differences, communicating identification and belonging...the focus will be on how style is used in the impression management of constructing the subculture breaker identity. (2014: 8)

The participants in the tap communities did not follow any explicit subculture criteria to determine their identity as a tap dancer or actively cultivate impression management in their performance.¹ The individuals did follow the pattern of choosing steps that reflect their personal approach to improvising.

The breakers of Langnes and Fastings' study focussed on individual performances.

While the tap community members often performed solo improvisations at the tap jams,

participants valued their interactions with the jazz trios and other dancers. The improvised exchanges at the tap jams are a vital element in understanding how participants viewed their involvement in the tap communities. Ethnomusicologist Jeffery van den Scott describes a similar finding in his symbolic interactionist approach to musical events:

seeing music as a social construct with meanings accorded by that society, followed by a return to musical content and tracing the development of the music as it evolves with societal change. Such an approach allows scholars to view music in culture as a set of values, norms, and practices – not just a “group of things” (Nettl 2005, pp. 170-171)...Symbolic interactionists help us unpack the complexities of everyday life music through such powerful concepts as self, identity, other, significant symbol, cooperation, and meaning. (2014: x)

The act of performing as part of an ensemble viewed within the symbolic interactionist framework revealed that music and movement created as part of these interactions generated identity for the community members. Similar to the breakers in Langnes and Fastings’ study, identity stems from individual style in jazz musicians. Jazz musicians define style by parameters in her or his approach to music such as playing in a particular music genre like bebop or swing.² Jazz musicians also favour improvising at particular tempos, dynamics, and harmonies and use these tendencies to inform their individual approach to improvisation.

Ethnomusicologist William Gibson (2010: 17) discusses how jazz musicians improvising in an ensemble construct identity through the ‘specific contingencies of particular role functions’. His study compares jazz musicians and their instruments to division of labour. Within the jazz ensemble, the musicians rely on their competency in the jazz performance conventions as a mark of her or his identity as a competent and

skilled player. Gibson (2010: 17) defines competency in jazz musicians as, ‘the ways in which they perform their respective roles has implications for the sound of the band and, consequently, for their identity as competent members of a competent group’. How a tap dancer selects her or his rhythms is also dependent on the role they play during an improvised performance. Some experienced performers acted as leaders during their solos and guided the musicians through the song, choosing steps that directed the musicians to change tempo or dynamics. Participants new to improvising at the tap jams followed the song structure played by the trio and preferred steps that matched the rhythms. These tap dancers acted as another performer that contributed to the overall sound of the trio but did not alter the original composition.

Both Gibson and Langnes and Fastings’ approach to symbolic interactionism held potential for my study but neither framework was completely compatible for my study of the tap communities. Langnes and Fastings focussed on elements symbolising belonging in the breaker subculture such as ritual gestures used in greetings and specific styles of clothing. The tap community members did not follow a dress code or use gestures but recognised the act of improvisation as an indication of membership. Gibson discusses how the jazz musicians are able to define and embody their individual role in the ensemble through jazz conventions:

Knowledge about conventions of practice is a resource to artistic action as it forms the primary reference for understanding the relation between ones’ actions and others’ understanding of them. Through conventions, artists are able to take on the role of the other, and to see the likely reactions of their peers and their audience. (2010: 16)

Gibson (2010: 16) maintains that the knowledge of the performance and practice of jazz music such as rules for soloing and supporting individual musicians, listening, and

adjusting elements such as tempo and dynamics while playing within in the ensemble creates an identity for the jazz musicians.

The role of the participants at the tap jams is limited to rhythmic contributions and therefore they are unable to engage fully in the conventions as jazz musicians.

Community members did not attend the jams with an embodied knowledge of how to listen and play like jazz musicians. Many participants were new to the practice of tap improvisation and therefore viewed the tap jams as a means to learn the conventions of improvising with musicians. The participants, with the exception of a few individuals, did not have knowledge of music notation and did not use musical scores to communicate with musicians.³ The tap dancers have limited tonal qualities in their tap shoe and may choose to engage with the rhythm of the harmony but cannot replicate the sounds. Tap dancers are not able to direct the band members in musical choices such as key change or harmony.

To fully understand what meanings were created through the process of improvisation, I examined the interactions of tap dancers and musicians, tap dancer and community member, and tap dancer and the audience. In addition to participant observation at the tap jams, individual case studies were conducted in each fieldsite. The case studies followed the progress of participants in the communities over an eighteen month period. I selected the participants by their regular involvement in the community and their availability to meet for the case studies outside of scheduled community activities. In the Manchester tap dance community, two white British women aged between twenty-four and thirty-five years volunteered to participate in the case study. Both women

consistently attended classes, workshops, master classes, and tap jams. In the London tap dance community one white British woman aged between forty-four and fifty five years and one African British woman aged between twenty-four and thirty-five years volunteered for the case study. Both women also participated regularly in community sponsored activities. All four participants consented to be filmed at the tap jams. In both tap communities, male participants were unavailable to meet for case studies, despite my attempts to create convenient meeting times for each individual.⁴

Interactions and Identity

Gibson (2010: 14) reveals that musical choices are interpreted into an identity for jazz musicians, stating that ‘improvising [is] a process of negotiating identity’. I explore how the participants negotiated and defined their role as an improvising performer as part of the ensemble and how that defined their identity as a tap dancer and musician. In the improvised performances of the participants I considered where the tap dancer or dancers were located and how they moved through space in relation to the jazz trio and how this impacted their identity as part of the ensemble. I also examined how tap dancers communicated non-verbally such as using eye contact or pointing to understand how tap dancers initiated musical decisions such as tempo changes.

The individual women participating in the case studies identified how their improvisations changed when performing with the jazz trio. All the women focussed on

interaction with the musicians, citing the creation of rhythmic exchanges and creating new musical ideas. All participants commented on how they worked to increase their confidence in solo improvised performance and to develop the ability to lead the musicians through the structure of the song, such as determining when and how long to trade fours or how many choruses and verses.

Participants in both communities described their performances at the tap jams as ‘going on a journey’ or ‘discovering something about yourself’ (Fieldnotes 2009). For tap dancers, improvising at a tap jam is a way of sharing what she or he has learned, such as new steps, new rhythms or new perspectives of listening to a favourite song. Gibson maintains that jazz musicians view improvisation as an active process to create their identity in performance:

If identity is understood as a positioning of an individual in relation to conventions of practice and contexts of action through the dialogical process of self, then we can see that, for jazz musicians, their identity as performers is worked out in context – that each time they play, musicians manage the particular parameters of action in relation to the people they are playing with to recreate a sense of their own identity. (2010: 25)

For the participants, tap improvisation is a means to demonstrate how well an individual can communicate the movement and musical discoveries found in the moment with the musicians. Tap jam organiser Murray states that a successful tap jam is when

I've learned something from whatever I've done...that I've found something new, or learnt something new about myself or the dance or the music...and I think when I'm watching other people at the jam I've become aware of them finding those things as well. You can see it you can just see that people are different when they've finished to when they went on...every time. So for me I think a successful jam is when I can see everybody's made discoveries that night and grown a bit. (Fieldnotes 22.10.10)

Participants used improvisation at the tap jams to find their own approach to share their discoveries. Performing at the tap jams allowed individuals constantly to discover their rhythmical tendencies and new movement patterns. Gibson states that jazz musicians use a similar approach in jam sessions to create an identity with

their own approach to the manipulation of harmony in improvisations, and these distinctive ways of improvising come to form part of their recognizable musical identities. A number of authors have emphasized that a strong ideology within jazz improvisation is precisely the development of an individual “voice” and identity (Berliner, 1994; Monson, 1996). (2010: 18)

The identities developed by the community members were defined by how they shared their personal discoveries. Improvised exchanges, such as trading eights with the musicians, focussed on what each individual wanted to explore:

Annette starts to scat with the drum as a jazz singer would. Michele responds to her with a two bar solo. They trade back and forth four times and then Michele’s rhythms become more complex as Annette begins to accompany her scats with her taps. Michele stops playing and Annette continues into a solo of scatting and tapping on her own. She looks behind her and nods to Jess and she steps onto the stage and starts ‘comping’ with Annette who is still scatting during her solos. ‘Comping’ is a term used by tap dancers to describe supporting another tap dancer by tapping out a simple rhythm to aid in keeping time or executing simple steps such as stomps to accent beats in the tap dancer’s improvised solo. Michele gradually builds the drum’s rhythms back in with Jess’s heel drops. Eventually the rest of the trio comes in and together the five performers build their rhythms into a blend of sounds. They keep going, Jess and Annette tapping and the trio playing until they build to a crescendo and finish together on a booming, single chord. (Fieldnotes 24.01.10)

In this exchange Annette improvises vocally or ‘scats’ using non-sequential words and syllables to complement the rhythms played by the drummer (Michele). The improvisation started with a set structure of trading between performers for the duration of two bars. As the complexity of rhythms increased, the tap dancer incorporated her voice and another performer. This created longer exchanges between the dancers and

musicians and the two bar solo structure was adjusted by all performers. Each solo fluctuated between two and four bars depending on the steps, vocals, and rhythms of the drummer. The two tap dancers were confident in their ability to alter the structure of the song to highlight both vocalisations and improvised tap steps. Through the interactions with the drummer and each other they shared with the audience how they discovered new ways of incorporating rhythmic patterns vocally and physically.

Humour is another element that featured in the participants' self-discoveries on stage. In some improvised performances, the tap dancer and the musician traded rhythms that referenced a particular melody from a song:

He trades bars with the tenor saxophonist who has joined the trio and smiles as the rhythms become more and more complicated. The trio finishes on a flourish and Junior does a quick turn before jumping to land on the stage as the band cuts off. He looks to Tigiri who is playing the bongos just behind the stage and taps out a rhythm on the floor. Tigiri watches and listens and copies the rhythm, not hitting it exactly. The two men trade back and forth and after about seven exchanges Tigiri is matching Junior's rhythm note for note. As Junior finishes the rhythm, he sings as he taps, 'da da dada dada da da...Tequila!' The audience laughs and the band breaks into the song. (Fieldnotes 25.04.10)

In this example, the tap dancer mentioned in the fieldnotes used his heightened musicality to insert a well-known lyric from a popular song.⁵ Repeated engagement with improvised tap performance at the tap jams allowed participants to develop their ability to share their discoveries on stage. Participants stated that

no two jams are the same... it's different, every month...you never re-create it... it's about performance, whatever you're doing, it's about performing, it's about how you use your space and your body in that space, how you manipulate that space to get what you want out of it. (Fieldnotes 26.02.11, London group interview)

The community members are not restricted to how they share their discoveries on stage. Tap dancers may change their approach depending on variables such as the song selection, mood, or arrangement of musicians in the trio.

Through the act of improvisation, the tap dancer is recognised as a competent performer capable of guiding the musicians through her or his improvised performance. The ability to explore different melodies during a single improvisation highlights another element of identity in jazz performance as explained by Gibson:

Identity is a complex issue for jazz musicians, as their identity as a player is tied to their identity as a “competent band member” and to the identity of the band as “a competent band.” The assessment of an individual as “competent” is dependent on the ways that the other band members perform their roles. (2010: 26)

The concept of identity was equally complex for community members. ‘Competency’ at the tap jams was commented on by the participants but individuals in the case studies used the term ‘confidence’. Confidence in improvised tap performance was identified by community members as the ability to share rhythmic discoveries with the audience through interactions with the musicians, such as trading eight or trading fours.

My observations in the field revealed that how confident an individual appeared during an improvised performance was dependent on how she or he heard and interpreted the rhythms in the music. Individuals less experienced in improvisation demonstrated tendencies to select set steps learned from classes that mimicked the rhythm, at times preferring to perform entire combinations that they adapted to the tempo. These participants performed combinations, such as a simple time step, to the music completely in sync with the tempo set by the band.⁶ More experienced community

members syncopated the rhythm of the time step and incorporated additional steps to accent the rhythms.



Figure 14: Group improvisation with using simple rhythms at Manchester Tap Jam April 2012.

Participants in the tap communities cited their confidence in improvisation as a part of their identity but as an identity that continuously shifted and developed. Participants were allowed to progress at their own pace so the identity of a ‘confident’ tap dancer and competent musician continued to evolve during each tap jam.

Confidence in tap improvisation held multiple meanings for each participant, as I observed in my analysis of the case studies. In the Manchester case studies, the two women remarked on how their confidence improved during each improvisation. Both

women identified differences in their posture and body language. Karen mentioned she did not keep her focus down at the stage as often in two out of the three clips. Sarah described how she looks directly at the jazz trio members and the audience throughout her tap improvisations on the final video clip instead of concentrating on her feet as she did in her early tap jams. The comments of the participants reflected my observations from fieldsites. Confidence was interpreted by participants and audience members through eye contact. Participants with more improvisation experience looked at the musicians and audience members while new community members looked down at the stage. Individuals new to improvised tap performing in groups would make eye contact with each other as a means of moral support or looked at the jam organiser for guidance. I observed the tap jam organisers pointing to individuals to indicate their turn to solo in groups or nodding their head to encourage the dancer to keep going. The organisers also used gestures such as twirling their fingers in the air above their heads which the musicians interpreted as ‘finish up’ to end the song when participants looked uncomfortable on stage. Audience members responded with cheers and applause when participants directed their gaze out to the audience during a difficult step or exchanged humorous gestures with the trio, such as winking or sticking their tongues out.

Both participants in the Manchester case studies identified the clip featuring the most recent tap jam filmed (June 2010) as their favourite performance due to the visible changes in the improvisations.⁷ Sarah commented on how she made eye contact with the musicians during her later improvisations. She believed this indicated that she felt confident enough in her rhythmic contributions to shape the direction of the improvisation. By using gestures such as pointing and nodding, Sarah was able to

initiate trading eights with one of the musicians and indicate that she wishes to finish the improvisation. Sarah highlighted this as demonstration of her progression as a performer. She valued her improvement of the instant compositions she created with the musicians and was able to identify these changes in the video clips. Karen agreed and remarked, ‘they seemed to get a bit better...by the third one it seemed to be comfortable, and it felt like that too’ (Case Study 1 06.05.11).



Figure 15: Sarah makes eye contact with the musicians instead of staring at the stage as she did in early tap jam performances.

Confidence also manifested as a demonstration of preferred patterns and tendencies in improvisation. Similar to jazz musicians favouring genre conventions, both participants in the Manchester tap community identified preferred steps and patterns in the video clips.⁸ Karen commented, ‘I always do cramp rolls and heel stomps...I think that’s how I find the rhythm in the music, through my heels’ (Case Study 1 06.05.11). Karen

recognised that she performed her cramp rolls with different rhythms in each clip, such as changing the tempo of the cramp rolls or altering the accents by syncopating her heel stomps. Identifying her favourite steps and rhythmical preferences demonstrates that Karen was aware of her own performance tendencies as dancer and as contributing musician. Fischlin and Heble (2004: 78) describe this awareness of patterns in musicians as ‘providing a portrait of the individual personality’. Similar to the jazz musician in Gibson’s (2010) case studies, the tap dancers executed recognisable patterns and steps that contributed to their identities. Creating rhythmic tendencies specific to each individual allowed the jazz trios to become more familiar with each participants’ approach to improvisation. The ensemble as a collective could begin to explore more creative rhythmic variations and take greater creative risks as the performers learned each other’s improvised tendencies.

Participants acknowledged unique tendencies in their improvisations, but they also identified that taking chances in their improvisations with the musicians was another presentation of confidence. In the London case studies, Annette always performed solo improvisations and identified herself as an experienced tap improviser.⁹ She recognised her frequent interactions with the musicians as a preference that formed part of her identity. Annette discussed how her performance preferences led her to focus on interactions with the musicians: ‘I like the clip with John (the pianist) that had the...call and response with the piano...it kind of captured the moment’ (Case Study 3 24.02.11). Valuing the interaction with the musician shows that Annette was confident that her tap steps created an equal contribution in the performance, creating a ‘moment’ of exchange. The meaning that she drew from this interaction was that Annette did not

perceive herself as just a dancer but also as a musician who is actively contributing to the improvised composition. Gibson explains that the competence of the musician creates the overall perception of an experienced ensemble:

An individual's identity is constructed not only through his or her own performance practices, but also through the practices of fellow musicians. So, it is not just that an individual's decisions to actions are contextually restricted by the ways that other musicians are playing, but that their very identity as a player in terms of the assessment of competence is tied to the group sound. (2010: 23)

Annette worked with the musician to demonstrate her musical skills and presented a performance that highlighted her musical ability as well as her movement.



Figure 16: Annette performs a duet of trading eights with the pianist at the November 2009 Tap Jam in London.

How much an individual developed their understanding and confidence in improvisation varied with each community member. The participants in both fieldsites did not offer any reflection on their movement choices as statements of their ethnic or social backgrounds, nor do they perceive their gender as a contributing factor in the selection of their tap steps. The age of each participant was not mentioned, rather the level of their experience or the number of years they have engaged in tap practice was discussed. Progression of the rhythms produced in improvisation was used as a measurement of success rather than physical virtuosity of their movements. All the participants recognised that they were able to progress at their own pace and determine which elements they focus on in performance.

My analysis of the case studies revealed a surprising lack of conversations about gender and identity. The absence of male tap dancers had the potential to create a female-centric perspective in the case studies but the issue of gender and identity in improvised performance was not discussed. The participants never commented on a feminine or masculine portrayal of their steps, even when asked to describe their own performances. The case study participants viewed the video clips as performances between dancers and musicians, referencing individual names but without engendering each performer. Individuals interviewed in addition to the case studies mentioned tap practitioners by name but did not differentiate performance styles by masculine or feminine qualities. In an excerpt from fieldnote observations, participants identified (Fieldnotes 11.01.10) the late American tap practitioner Eddie Brown's style as having 'challenging and fun' steps and 'interesting rhythms' after learning one of his combinations in class.

Individuals did not refer to his steps as masculine or even as American, but were linked individually to Brown.

The case study participants observed tap dance from the same perspective as audience members: as an improvised movement and music arrangement with no clear roles for each gender. The comments of the participants appeared to contradict how an audience perceives identity in theatrical dance as Ramsay Burt writes:

The body is the primary mode of communication in dance, and it is through our bodies that we are allocated our gender. Issues relating to the social construction of the gendered body are central to the way gender is represented in theatre dance. But dance theatre is also a spectacle. Different performances invite the spectator to look at dance in different ways...The way spectators derive pleasure from the spectacle of dance is also determined by their gender, social background, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and other components of identity. (2007: 6)

Burt's claim of the spectator's enjoyment of the dance performance being dependent on their background may explain why gender was not an element considered in the performance descriptions of the case studies. The video clips were evaluated by the participants as individual performance events without consideration of their own gender or the gender of other performers. The participants' choice to appreciate and discuss the performance identities in terms of rhythmic elements revealed how they valued their own musical experiences from their social and cultural backgrounds. Instead of physical movements that implied gender, participants commented on their preference for music genres as an influence in their improvisations. Without the focus on American tap history in syllabus training or in the tap jams, many participants cannot draw on an understanding of gender roles in American tap performance. The women in the case studies performed in both flat heeled tap shoes and high heeled tap shoes but

did not feel that the shoes impacted on their improvised rhythms nor did they offer comments on the role tap shoes played for female American tap dancers.¹⁰ The women instead discussed differences in their rhythm choices depending on the song, such as how they improvised to a Latin jazz song with straight beats or how they would change the accents to match a song with a swing beat. The participants related how they appeared more comfortable performing to jazz songs that they had heard prior to the tap jam, such as 'Take 5' by Dave Brubeck (1959) or 'Night in Tunisia' by Dizzy Gillespie (1942).

Berliner (1994: 28) cites how the environment of an individual directly influences her or his development as a performer. Recounting anecdotes from musicians he interviewed, Berliner (1994: 28-31) suggests that the format of many religious services served as a performance framework for beginning jazz musicians. African American church services frequently feature a call and response format between the minister and congregation and Berliner postulates that this could reinforce a jazz musician's familiarity with the call and response found in jazz improvisations. Berliner refers to these church performance models as part of a 'music culture' and potentially a key factor in shaping the development of a jazz musician. He offers an anecdote of a classically trained pianist struggling to accompany an African American gospel choir through improvisation only and no sheet music as an example of performance training in different music culture:

[a]s these situations suggest, children who grow up around improvisers regard improvisation as a skill within the realm of their own possible development. In absence of this experience, many view improvisation as beyond their ability. (1994: 30)

Observations at both fieldsites confirmed the presence of call and response during the interactions between jazz musicians and tap dancers but upon further investigation, community members revealed their initial exposure to this technique was at the tap jams, not through formal training or religious events. Participants interviewed in both communities did not have access to alternative applications of improvisation techniques such as those which Berliner's jazz musicians acquired through performing at church services.

An experience documented in my fieldnotes reflected Berliner's idea that an individual's background impacts on their performance:

Jess then brought us out of the circle and got us into partners and asked us to pick a few styles of music and then to, as a pair, decide how to change between styles; e.g. call and response, trading 8's, etc. I was paired with Sarah who admitted straight away that she was 'out of her depth' and had 'never improvised before' in tap class. She said she was really good at picking up steps but wasn't comfortable improvising. I tried to reassure her that it was not too scary and suggested that we just trade 8's as a simple structure and stay with music styles that had a simple time signature such as rock or swing and that we would just 'see where it goes'. (Fieldnotes 23.02.09)

Sarah trained within a syllabus 'culture' progressing through several levels of the ISTD examinations. Her exposure to the tap steps glossary pre-dated the addition of improvisation games in the 2009 tap syllabus. She discussed her ability to be 'really good at picking up steps' as part of preparing for tap exams. Claiming she was 'out of her depth' and 'never improvised' in tap classes supports Berliner's claim of how the environment may influence an individual's development. Furthermore, my actions of reassuring Sarah and claiming improvisation is 'not too scary' revealed the tap 'culture' I trained within included frequent improvisation that enables my approach to the classes to be more relaxed and enjoyable.

The performance environments described in the case studies raised the question of how participants defined their own performance style and identity if gender was not a defining factor. The syllabus training experienced by many participants in both communities contributed to their individual experience of tap dance. Gibson (2010: 24) maintains, ‘musical personalities and styles are defined in part by their relation to normative practice’. Participants in the case studies frequently reinforced the association of syllabus training with their position of the arms when executing particular steps:

I feel like I got the footwork going, I just need to work on my body...I can still see in there my late teen years of ISTD tap...I'm still quite upright in my upper body...and focus on keeping my arms still. I'd say I'm too prim! (Fieldnotes 06.05.11)

The participant felt her improvised performances at the tap jams could be more reflective of her individual interpretation of the rhythms and described a need to ‘break away’ (Fieldnotes 06.05.11) from the syllabus training. She expressed a desire to relax her upper body in order to focus more on her rhythms.

Berliner highlights ‘paths of development’ that are specific to the performer, echoing the control of individual development that attracts participants to the tap jams and explains further how the jazz community impacts the development of an individual:

[t]he value that the jazz community places on personal responsibility is especially appropriate for the artistic growth of initiates. Self-reliance requires them to select their own models for excellence and to measure their abilities against them. It enhances their powers of critical evaluation, cultivates their tastes, and provides them with an early sense of their own individuality. Overall, the jazz community’s educational system sets the

students on paths of development directly related to their goal: the creation of a unique improvisational voice within the jazz tradition. (1994: 59)

The jazz community's goal of enabling musicians to improvise and express their own interpretation music is a goal reflected in the tap communities. Individuals were attracted to the tap communities because they provide the opportunity to share the process of how participants develop their identities. The tap jams create a space for the participants to relate to other tap dancers exploring their own identity. A tap technique class does not generate the ability to share these discoveries with an audience and other tap dancers who recognise and appreciate their accomplishments. As sociologist Nicolas Dempsey writes:

when human beings engage in successful joint action, we derive pleasure from closely coordinating our actions with those taken by our co-participants. Whether we choose to work together with a group of others, or we are thrown into a group by the exigencies of work, family, war, or sport, we want the activity at hand to proceed smoothly. We want to understand the actions of those with whom we engage in joint action. We wish for our actions to be similarly understood and through those understandings to produce pleasant, successful interactions. (2008: 2)

Participants in the case studies maintained that the success of interacting with the musicians created an identity that reflected their confidence as a dancer and musician as Sarah explains:

to me, they (my improvisations at the tap jams) were successful for my own progression, I guess, and confidence...but I think everybody seems to really enjoy being really supportive and can see that I was progressing, so I think it was successful in that sense as well...and it's such an informal environment, the tap jam, that you can have that...and the same with the musicians. (Case Study 2 06.05.11)

The participants in the case studies claimed their interactions with jazz musicians at tap jams were vital in allowing individuals freedom to ‘say anything you want with [their] steps’ (Fieldnotes 27.02.11) and develop the ability to share their discoveries.

Tap dancer and Audience

During the tap jams, the audience members play an active role in both interpreting and generating meaning for the tap dancer. Audience members re-enforce each participant’s identity in their recognition of her or him as a tap dancer. While the tap communities did not require any specific garments to distinguish between audience and performer, the act of wearing tap shoes became a symbol that identified participants as tap dancers. Wearing tap shoes on stage was interpreted by the audience as an element of performance practice. David Bastien and Jeremy Rose (2014: 32) give an example of jazz musicians wearing suits and ties to match the dress code of their audience, stating that ‘groups dress for their audiences; not because the dress is inherently important for cooperation, but because how the co-operators dress is communication to their audiences and customers’.

Langnes and Fasting explain that in dance forms such as breakin’ the dancer is identified through elements such as clothing:

Through clothing style the breakers articulated and projected their character and self-image, their desired “presentation of self” (Goffman, 1959). During the socialization

stage Sascha learned the practical importance of signifying subculture identification through his/her clothing. The dress code was, despite some crew variations, the same for all regardless of level, age and gender. (2014: 10)

My observations in both fieldsites revealed a lack of uniformity in the dress of participants except for the presence of tap shoes. Despite a lack of 'dress code' as seen in the breakers, the audience members used the tap shoes as a visual and aural confirmation of the individual performer.

Having an audience present gave meaning to the improvisations for the participants in that their interactions with the musicians and community became a performance. Interacting with the audience occurred through verbal and aural responses to community members' improvisations.¹¹ Cheering, applause, and commentary in the form of positive affirmations such as 'yeah!', 'go on!', and 'alright!' created meaning for the performers in a form of acknowledgement for their rhythmic discoveries. Blumer states that

[t]he gesture has meaning for both the person who makes it and for the person to whom it is directed. When the gesture has the same meaning for both, the two parties understand each other. (1986: 9)

The participants and audience members understood the gesture of applause as validation of their improvisations. When a participant executed a tap step that highlighted or complemented the rhythms of the jazz trio, the audience and community members applauded. The act of applauding and cheering the improvised steps is interpreted in two ways for the tap dancers. In one instance it is confirming the tap dancer's identity as a musician, as the audience recognises that they have contributed to the song with their own rhythms.

The second interpretation of the audience's reaction is a confirmation of each individual's discoveries on stage. When audience members cheer or applaud a participant's steps, they are responding to moments in each individual's explorations on stage. A participant finds a rhythm that reflects what they hear in the music and performs the steps to match or complement the sound. Audience applause is a reaction to the rhythmic discovery onstage and confirms a crucial element of self-discovery in the formation of an individual's identity.

Tap dancer and Musicians

Improvisation produces collaborative meanings that could not be achieved as a single performer. As sociologist Celine-Marie Pascale (2011: 88) maintains '[t]he source of meaning for symbolic interaction is collective; it is not individually determined nor is it intrinsic to objects'. The improvised exchanges produce meanings that contribute to the participant's identity as a tap dancer and as a musician.¹² Trading with a musician during an improvisation reinforces the dual identity of dancer and musician that participants described during interviews and case studies. Participants claim that contributing to the composition of the song by trading eights or fours made them feel a part of the band as well as a dancer.

Any rhythmic exchanges that were initiated by the community members could shift tempo at any time. Despite this creative option, the tap dancer is not responsible for

maintaining the tempo throughout the song as the drummer would be in a jazz band.

Gibson states that in jazz jam sessions, the drummer must use rhythm as a unifying factor for the ensemble:

“‘keeping time’” does not necessarily involve a continuous delineation of one rhythm, the responsibility of knowing and emphasizing the pulse of a tune lies substantially with them. As with chordal and bass players, the ways in which drummers orientate to this general role of ‘‘keeping time’’ depends on the context of the players they are working with. To avoid dissonance, drummers need to rhythmically ‘‘lock in’’ with the other band members, and to find ways of emphasizing rhythms that are consistent with the playing styles of their colleagues. (2010: 23)

During the tap jams, the drummer is not restricted to maintain a consistent beat while trading eights or fours with the tap dancer. The drummer must be as adaptable as the tap dancer, as Gibson (2010: 23) explains, ‘the ways in which drummers orientate to this general role of ‘‘keeping time’’ depends on the context of the players they are working with’. The tap dancer may choose to increase or decrease the tempo and the drummer may match the tempo or change it in response.

The ‘trading fours’ or ‘trading eights’ with another musician in the band reinforces the tap dancer’s identity as a musician:

I step onstage with no clue as to what I will do and not very sure of the song. I think I can recall the tune, but now is not the time to second guess myself whether or not I have remembered it correctly. I ask if anyone in the trio wants to trade eights, knowing that the drummer has been busy trading eights with Jess tonight. The pianist volunteers and I tell him that I’ll simply cue him when I want him to step in. I start the solo with alternating stomps...I progress into some more complicated heel drops and steps. To be honest, I do not remember exactly what I did; I only recall that I did some toe stands, and turns along with perrididdles, and some chugs somewhere. What I do remember explicitly is that there was a great energy and communication between the pianist and myself. I had not had that much fun trading with a pianist in ages...not since Kansas City. The song finishes and I do some fast shuffles on one leg to mimic the cymbal roll the drummer is doing and I jump to land on the last note. The audience applauds and Jess congratulates me as I step off stage to head back toward my table. I cannot help but

grin like an idiot. That was fun...Later, while sitting at the musicians' table, the pianist leans over to tell me he thought it was great the way I interacted with them during the song. 'It makes it so much more' he tells me, revealing that he had never really had the opportunity to trade eights with a tap dancer before, 'they usually pick the drummer' he says and they all laugh. (Fieldnotes: 22.03.10)

My improvisation with the pianist went beyond just two individuals performing different rhythms: it was an active exchange of musical ideas. During our interaction, the meaning the pianist and I assigned the rhythms changed as we interpreted each other's musical choices. Pascale describes how interactions rely on interpretation to create new meanings and can be

modified during interaction through interpretive processes (Blumer, 1986). A sense of meaning involves an interpretive process during which an individual communicates with him/herself; in the process of self-indication, he or she may come to suspend, regroup, or transform meanings. (2011: 88)

The pianist adapted his choice of rhythms based on my interpretation of the music as I heard it in the moment. Interacting with the pianist changed the duration of the piece and produced piano solos that were not present in the original composition of the song. His comment on the song becoming 'so much more' indicates that he was cognisant of my rhythmic ideas in the music as well as my physical performance. His awareness contributes to the creation of my identity as a tap dancer and a musician through our improvised exchange which enabled me to directly influence the overall sound and structure of the song.

The complexity of the musical exchanges between each individual and the musicians is indicative of their competency as an improvising tap dancer. Observations in my fieldwork reveal a progression in the ability of participants to interact with musicians.

Experienced improvisers engage in extended trading with musicians that may produce new compositions. Individuals less experienced in improvisation demonstrate tendencies to select steps learned from classes that mimic the rhythm. These participants may choose to improvise to the song without any deviations to the original composition. For these individuals, the initial challenge lies in determining the best use of their repertoire of steps to complement the song.

Contributing to the musical conversations at tap jams requires performance experience of the musicians as well as the tap dancer. Varying levels of competency can produce complications in the communication between tap dancer and musician:

Trading eights with the band was more difficult than I expected; even though I had discussed this with the band before my solo, it didn't really 'happen'. I turned to the band at two separate points during the song and made eye contact and nodded at the drummer and bass player, indicating their turn to solo. It was strange, even though they were looking at me and had their heads cocked to one side in the pretext of listening, I found it very difficult to forge a real connection with either musician. Usually when trading eights with a band member I find it quite easy to communicate my intention and initiate a satisfying exchange, making a clear statement with my taps as to the rhythmic ideas I present, e.g. a fast barrage of sixteenth notes or a sparse staccato sequence of quarter notes. With these musicians, I didn't feel the awareness on their behalf and felt the ideas we exchanged were not clear. It was as if I would present an idea, 'Ba, ba, boom, boom, boom, katunk' and in response I would hear a completely different idea from the band. Sometimes this will happen with musicians, but it usually contains some kind of direct opposition or complementary rhythm. With these musicians, this did not occur...at the time I chalked this up to my lack of practice or performance time with a live band, but after an interview with Junior Laniyan in beginning of April, he too reflected on a similar experience in performing with the band. He explained that he thought it was down to inexperience of the band not performing live with tap dancers before. (Fieldnotes 11.02.09)

The musicians mentioned in the text are members of a university jazz band playing for a special tap jam in the Manchester tap community presented at the Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts. It was their first time performing with tap dancers. Gibson (2010: 20) describes a similar occurrence with jazz musicians: 'when players of different levels

or with very different styles collaborate; the creation of stability can be hampered because of the difficulty of predicting what someone else is going to do next'. The musicians did not respond to my rhythmic ideas because they were unfamiliar with the practice of trading eights. They did not recognise my signals, both musical and gestural, to initiate an exchange.

The tap jams at Band on the Wall in Manchester and Ronnie Scott's in London include jazz trios with extensive experience in performing with tap dancers. Gibson (2010: 22) states that musicians must understand 'conventions that delineate how other people are to interact with those roles' in order to create a supportive and creative musical collaboration. The jazz trios in both communities are able to provide support for performers through techniques such as adjusting the tempo throughout the song or allowing for extra bars in 'trading' eights or fours if the tap dancer needs additional time to complete their improvised solo.

Tap dancer and Community Member

Participants have the option to improvise with other community members as well as the musicians during their improvised performance. While some participants choose this option as a means for additional support in their first improvisations, other individuals invite community members to share the stage as an additional option for a musical collaboration.¹³ With another tap dancer they can experience how another individual

explores rhythm and allow that to influence their own discoveries. In these improvised collaborations, individuals engage in musical and physical interactions that provide inspiration for rhythms and steps to share on stage.

I observed these inspirational interactions in the case studies. Karen performed improvised duets with another community member and twice with her mother. She discussed how she enjoyed 'playing off the other tap dancer' in the improvisations (Case Study 1 06.05.11). By listening to how her mother improvised her steps, Karen understood how her mother located herself in the music and within her own rhythms. Improvising with another tap dancer was a process that the two women used to develop as sociologist Christopher Schneider (2010: 9) writes, '[p]eople make sense of themselves through their own experiences of music'. She and her mother shared musical ideas that they could not have achieved in a dance studio without live music or an audience.

Karen emphasised her mother's growing confidence in improvisation was due to her increased presence at Manchester tap jams.¹⁴ She discussed how her mother was not available for weekly tap classes and how the tap jams provided the performance platform for her to engage with the dance form on her terms. Her mother's desire to improve her tap technique and confidence in performance is due to her watching Karen's early tap jams. Observing others build their confidence in improvised tap performance inspired her mother to return to tap dance. Karen and her mother understood their development was a result of improvising at the tap jams.



Figure 17: Karen performs a duet with her mother at the March 2010 Tap Jam in Manchester.

Global Interactions and Individual Identities

Despite participants drawing on their own rhythmic interpretations, improvised tap practice is identified as ‘American’ tap dance by English tap community members during the case studies and interviews. Although participants associate improvisation with American tap practice, the tap jams do not present tap dance as purely an American dance form and participants do not seek to perform as American tap dancers. As the practice of the tap jam is shared across the globe, it raises the question of how the improvised interactions between performers created individual, rather than national, identities.

Incorporating the American practice of improvised rhythm tap in English tap jams is a form of glocalisation. Dance scholar Sherry Shapiro (2008: 257) explains glocalisation as ‘a process in which the local affects the global and the global influences the local’. An example of glocalisation in the tap jams is community members revealing that their improvisations were influenced by their English syllabus training. The ISTD syllabus originated in England and although organisations in the United States deliver tap syllabi, performers at early tap jams in America rarely studied in dance studios from a set syllabus.¹⁵ Tap community members frequently cited the impact of the syllabus training on their improvised performances at tap jams. Sheridan, an organiser of the London Tap Jams, claims:

people who are tap dancers who are in the group... they've come up from syllabus, they were taught ISTD when they were children. And they've had to unlearn things as a result...If you watch a dancer that has been trained in ISTD syllabus you'll see them doing certain things: like moving their arms in certain ways and certain steps... like flaps, that they can't do without doing the arm movements with them. And it's really strange,' cause you see that in rhythm tap classes that people try and do this stuff and it just doesn't work... that and associating rhythms with steps; so say, only being able to a shuffle on a particular beat...that sort of thing. (2009)

A participant may favour a combination of steps learned from a syllabus amalgamation in their improvisations but will adapt the rhythms depending on the music, such as adding extra ball changes to a riff to adjust to a different time signature.¹⁶ Tap teacher Hartley, who is not a member of the London tap community, commented on the effect of learning tap dance from a syllabus and its contribution to how an individual performs in his tap classes:

English tap has got a connotation; English tap is grown from a syllabus, which was written in the 30s by people who used to do ballet. So a ballet syllabus and the tap syllabus are very similar; they're very constricted, they have the English way about them, which is kind of...emotionless way...it's very strict as well it's very typically English, which is all placed and...proper...when you do syllabus so much you can't free yourself from it...you're kind of restricted. It's got kind of a...a language of its own and it sits on your body, with your arms and your back and the way you move your neck...You can't all dance the same. (Fieldnotes, interview with D. Hartley 10.05.2010)

Hartley associates the strict alignment and emphasis on correct posture as 'English' qualities derived from practicing tap dance within a syllabus structure. The impact of English tap syllabus as glocalised tap practice is also reflected in the description of tap dance by the marketing team of Pineapple Dance Studio in London:

Tap dancing is most generally associated with the films and musicals of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. Anyone at any age can have a go, and in a very short space of time you can gain a real sense of accomplishment. Whilst it may take a bit of patience, in three months you will have picked up enough to go home and enjoy yourself – as well as impress people. Tap has always been a people's or 'popular dance', sharing a common history with traditional clog dances, Russian steppe dances and Irish jigs and reels. A street dance, tap dance does not grow through syllabus. Though syllabus can help with technique, it is often used as a tool to teach steps, though in reality it is not connected to what the vast majority of tap dancers do. This is why syllabus grading rarely translates in most open classes. In Britain we never had the American jazz tap tradition, but much tap taught today is a fusion of the English and American tap. The difference between English and American styles is that the English style is bouncy with lots of arm and leg movements. American is based on the original tap dances of the thirties and forties, and keeps the foot and ankle work very close to the floor, giving a smoother, more relaxed look. Tap is the original jazz dance. Jazz is at the root of all tap and informs all tap dancers to one degree or other.
http://www.pineapple.uk.com/classes_and_timetable/tap/ (accessed 24 October 2013)

In this selection, the website clearly acknowledges the difference in the historical evolution of tap dance in England and the United States. The text also highlights differences in tap pedagogy and the social contexts of England and the United States. The comparison of tap dance to a street dance highlights the lack of codified step and examination process that many early American practitioners experienced in their training.¹⁷ The claim that the syllabus should be used to learn technique but is 'not

connected to what the vast majority of tap dancers do' alludes to how improvisation is identified with American tap practice.

How each individual utilises her or his ISTD training within their improvisations changes how the dance form is performed as an individual interpretation of tap dance in England. Gibson writes of a similar trend in jazz musicians who incorporate their musical training in their improvisations, noting that

[w]hile there is a preference for finding ways to fit in with other people, musicians cannot completely overcome their embodied playing styles. Different musical personalities have different orientations to performance conventions. (2010: 24)

Despite the influence of the tap syllabus training, participants do not view their performances as an example of English tap dance and designate their practice as tap dance, without any national connotations. Jazz historian Stuart Nicholson cites this as the reason for jazz music outside of the United States unable to generate clear national identities, stating that jazz music is adopted into a community of performers on an individual basis:

Like English, jazz is a mongrel, a music that drew together several strands of vernacular music including spirituals, work and folk songs, ragtime, minstrel music, brass band music, and blues that were freely mixed with elements from hymns, popular songs, and popular classics of the day. The whole history of jazz is dotted with examples of appropriation, resulting in a steady broadening of the jazz vocabulary by borrowing from other "languages"...Music, like language, evolves to suit the culture that uses it and speaks on behalf of the society that spawns it. (2005: 173)

Nicholson (2005: 177) also acknowledges that jazz music may acquire generalised labels based on the origin of the new music, but the location does not completely re-

define the musical interpretation of the genre. This reflects a similar situation to the tap communities of England failing to produce a distinct 'English' interpretation of tap practice at the tap jams. Catherine Foley argues that the construction of an identity within glocalised dance practice relies on an interdependence of individual, national and international identities, claiming that

[a]lthough globalization may increase local distinctiveness, it would be a mistake to think that local, national, and global operate totally independently of each other; they are interconnected, each relying on the other for inspiration as well as economic and cultural survival. (2001: 43)

Within the two tap communities in England, the emphasis of individual rhythmic interpretation and the individual cultural identities in performance continue to blur until it becomes an individual's presentation of culture, not a nation's. Nicholson discusses a similar impact on the global transmission of jazz music:

Since the 1960s, there has been a gradual realization, more outside the United States than in it, that jazz does not have to be American, or even sound American, to be jazz. As jazz has spread around the world, it has acquired other histories in other countries. (2005: xii)

The identities and personal discoveries arising from the interactions between community members are dependent on how each individual experiences the environment of the tap jam. Glocalisation of the tap jam and globalised tap practice enhances the aspect of individuality in tap performance. Sociologist Thomas Morrione writes that it is possible for glocalisation to maintain the integrity of the event without drastically altering the function:

globalization actually plays a neutral role in the change process and its effects occur in a selective, non-uniform manner because of individual and collective definitions of it as it impacts their lives... The neutral role of globalization is made more meaningful in the light of symbolic interaction theory, which describes how individual and collective acts are constructed and how actor constituted social structures, emerge, are maintained, and change. (2013: 4)

The tap jams retained the original intention of promoting improvised tap performance but the focus shifted to support the non-competitive development of the individual community members. Halifu Osumare explains that interpretation within a dance style is an inevitable process during glocalisation. Despite the inspiration and excitement of new music and movement, she maintains that the exported elements of dance will adapt depending upon the new environment:

even hip-hop culture exported to foreign countries will not remain in the initial imitation phase of American rap or dance styles for very long; but rather must adapt to its new environment through a localization process that serves that culture's own social issues and cultural priorities. (2007: 6)

The tap communities support the development of each participant and this contributes to variations in the reinterpretation of tap performance at the individual level. There is no clear and recognisable style of American or English tap performance as the intention is to let each participant determine which elements of rhythm and movement are explored in their improvisations, either from a syllabus glossary of steps or a choice to incorporate rhythms from popular music.

Applying the symbolic interactionist approach to glocalised tap improvisation and identity reflects global trends of the dance form. Tap practitioners frequently tour individually and with the intention delivering workshops alongside their performances. Tap practitioners such as Michelle Dorrance, Jason Samuels Smith, Andrew Nemr,

Roxanne Butterfly, Max Pollak, and Lisa LaTouche are advertised singularly rather than as part of large group productions. The tours include workshops and master classes as key elements of their promotion, creating equal emphasis on teaching and performing abroad. American tap practitioner Savion Glover (2000: 42) describes the shift towards individual expression and away from theatricality as 'taking tap back to what it was', focussed on the individual's interpretation of rhythm.

Examining the glocalisation of the tap jam has revealed that an individual's experience of the interactions with musicians and tap dancers may be *influenced* by her or his interpretation of national, local, or global rhythms but the geographical location does not determine her or his identity as a tap dancer. The tap dancer is free to use improvisation as a form of social interaction to share rhythmic discoveries from their own movements and musical background. An individual's identity can be fluid if she or he decides to incorporate new experiences and influences; as their performance style evolves so does their identity.

Summary

Examining the improvised exchanges of the tap jams through a symbolic interactionist perspective allowed me to understand how the act of improvisation allows an individual to develop a performance identity. The meanings generated in the improvised interactions at the tap jams contribute to each individual's ability to make sense of the

self, the community, and their environment in the fleeting moments of their tap performances.

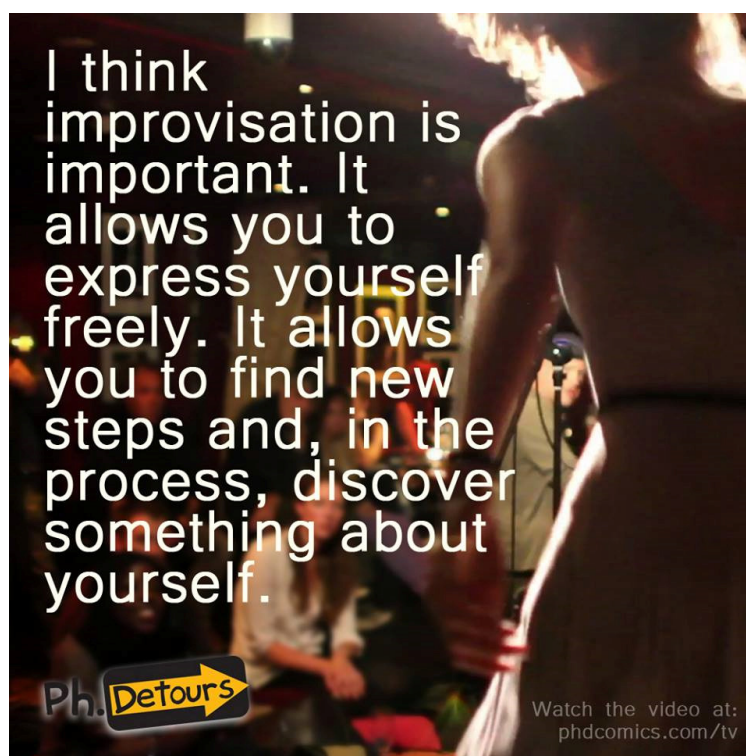


Figure 17: A participant at the London Tap Jam shares her thoughts for episode eight of the *PhDetours* 'Tap Dancing Thesis' (Cham 2013)

Some participants develop the proficiency to share their rhythmic discoveries as a recognisable and repeatable performance identity to use in professional practice, as seen in the careers of Laniyan, and Walker.¹⁸ For the amateurs and non-professionals, the act of improvising at the tap jams provides them with the means to develop how they communicate aspects of the self on multiple levels: aural, visual, and physical. The glocalisation of the tap jams has not removed the primary intention the event: offering a space for individuals to utilise rhythmic exploration as a means for self-discovery. The opportunity to share these discoveries as a social activity is what draws community members and a growing number of tap enthusiasts to future tap jams.

Notes:

¹ Langnes and Fasting (2014: 4) describe impression management as: '[a]s a staged drama people perform: they impress and are impressed. Impression management involves verbal and non-verbal communication, bodily adornment and the arrangement of scenery. The performance is given front stage but is rehearsed backstage, where "the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted" (Goffman, 1959: 112). To protect the vital secrets of shows, the backstage is separated from the front stage by barriers for the audience'.

² Jazz musicians may play the down beat differently depending on the genre. In swing, the musicians may emphasise the beats two and four in a 4/4 time signature while in bebop the accent can fall on any beat.

³ Laniyan and Walker were both studying percussion and piano at the time of fieldwork. At times Laniyan or Walker would play the drums or piano while a jazz band member, such as Drees, performed an improvised tap performance.

⁴ I discuss the impact of the lack of male participants in the case studies later in this chapter.

⁵ *Tequila* is a 1958 Latin-inspired rock and roll instrumental song composed by The Champs.

⁶ Knowles (1998: 216) defines a time step as, 'an eight measure movement traditionally placed at the beginning of a routine which had a readily recognizable and clearly defined rhythm'. The time step is traditionally used by tap dancers to indicate their preferred tempo. Additionally, the more experienced tap dancer may use the time step to communicate the desired tempo to the musicians. Experienced performers sometimes start in silence with a time step and allow the band to listen for a few bars to determine the pace of the song and feel of the improvisation.

⁷ See Clip 3: Manchester case studies footage in Appendix A

⁸ The musicians playing at the tap jams discussed preferences they each had, such as playing songs with a twelve bar blues structure or an AAB structure. At the Manchester tap jams, 'Song for my Father', originally composed by the Horace Silver Quartet, was a popular selection because of its AAB head, or main theme. The musicians liked playing the song because the AAB pattern was easy for new improvisers to follow and the bossa nova rhythms also challenged more experienced tap dancers.

⁹ See Clip 4: London case studies footage in Appendix A.

¹⁰ Hill (2010: 325) maintains, 'If the high-heeled tap shoe has been the most enduring icon for women in tap, so has it been the most divisive. The shoe that brings the dancer onto the balls of her feet, enhancing the long line of the leg, is also emblematic of the female chorus-line dancer who – although admired for her pretty legs and clean tapping, was deemed incapable of the rhythm-tapping virtuosity of her male peers...The high-heeled tap shoe is what women in the millennium have reclaimed. Demonstrating their ability to execute, with facile expertise, all the steps of male tap masters in high-heeled shoes, they have one-upped the men'.

¹¹ See Clip 5: Example of improvised interaction between tap dancer and audience in Appendix A.

¹² See Clip 6: Example of improvised interaction between tap dancer and musician in Appendix A.

¹³ See Clip 7: Example of improvised interaction between tap dancer and community member in Appendix A.

¹⁴ Karen's mother did not initially attend the tap jams and was not a regular participant in community sponsored classes.

¹⁵ I discuss the early tap jams in Chapter Two. Organisations such as Music Works Unlimited offer Al Gilbert's Tap Syllabus for teachers in private studios. The American Tap Dance Foundation (<http://atdf.org/TTCPIIndex.html>, 2014) launched a Level 1 Certificate for tap teachers that follows the Copasetic Canon. The curriculum is based on routines from the company the Copasetics and also offers guidance for teachers who 'want a technically solid approach to teaching rhythm tap that provides a rich immersion in swing and bebop jazz musicality and a foundation for 21st century tap dance explorations'.

¹⁶ Riffs are tap steps that combine changing the weight to the ball of the foot (a ball change) with heel drops and scuffing the heel forward. These steps are traditionally done in a 4/4 time signature in the Tap Dance Faculty Syllabus (ISTD 2009).

¹⁷ Hill (2010: 99) describes how many popular American tap practitioners in the 1930s flocked to Harlem to ‘perform, to watch one another, and to compete on the street’ as part of developing their tap practice and technique.

¹⁸ Walker works as a professional performer specialising in tap dance (<http://www.annettewalker.co.uk/>, 2014) as does Laniyan (<http://www.londontapjam.org/people/about-the-team>, 2014).

Chapter 7 Future Improvisations

This thesis examined improvisation in tap dance practice in England as a process of social interaction. Conducting a comparative analysis of tap pedagogy and practice in the United States and England revealed that the social structure of informal tap mentorships was not included as part of the syllabus approach in English dance studios and later the tap jams. Participants developed their tap practice without focussing on the improvised interactions found in the American tap jams. American tap practitioners and tap historians such as Hill (2010), Frank (1994), and Stearns and Stearns (1968) maintain that improvisation is a key to creating a unique performance style, as improvisation places the tap dancer in situations where she or he can choose how to respond as a means of self-expression. My study of the English tap communities reveals how improvisation facilitates the development of a unique identity for each participant in multiple social environments. To understand how individuals learned to improvise and develop their tap practice I selected ethnography as a methodology. A multi-sited ethnographic approach allowed me to witness tap improvisation as a process in social settings such as workshops and social networking websites.

The tap jams exist as an open performance platform for the community members to explore improvisation together and to share these musical discoveries with an audience. At the tap jams in both communities, improvisation and interactions between performers allow each participant to share rhythmic discoveries in a supportive and creative environment. In addition to the tap jams, technique classes, the Hoofers

Lounge, and the online presence of the tap communities demonstrated how tap dance improvisation was practiced and performed outside of a theatrical context.

When viewed through a symbolic interactionist framework, analysing membership of the tap communities reveals that the act of improvisation becomes more than just a performance tool: it also creates a sense of belonging for the participants. Tap improvisation acts as a series of interactions between performers that creates social relationships and performance identities. Each individual forms a response to these interactions based on how they interpret the information received from the musicians, the audience, and other performers. The tap jams appeal to a broad range of performers in both communities because tap improvisation is a shared social process in which anyone can participate regardless of their socio-cultural background.

The global transmission of tap dance and the tap jams are changing how the dance form is learned and performed. During the improvised performance of the English tap jams, participants do not focus on honouring past tap practitioners. Ethnologist Tomie Hahn (2007: 46) writes that ‘embodiment and realization arise through experience and practice’ and the lack of association to specific practitioners creates new meanings for embodied knowledge in tap dance. The behaviours, patterns, habits, music and movement preferences of participants in the English tap communities contributes to a hybridisation of cultural information unique to each participant. Tap dance has not lost its distinction as an American dance form but continues to expand its music and movement repertoire as it travels across international borders. Communication scholars Georgette Wang and Emile Yueh-yuYeh state that

cultures are by nature fluid and are always in motion as the result of continuing interaction and discourse both from within the culture itself and with the outside world...However, it is important to also note that the constant motion and incorporation of different elements brings with it new characteristics, new distinctions, and new similarities. From this perspective, perhaps hybridization and globalization do lead to the loss of cultural distinctiveness in cultural products—and in cultures as well. However by losing what was there, we are presented with something new, something fresh, something that represents yet another hybrid. (2005: 22)

Exploring tap dance in social contexts highlights the need to seek out broader approaches to the academic study of tap dance. Tap dance needs to be featured more prominently in discussions on gender and ethnicity in dance research and dance history. Hill (2010) contextualises gender roles in tap dance in her text but considers only American tap practitioners. Many participants did not remark on identifiable differences in the steps of male and female performers and this reflects a shift away from Hill's (2010:3) analysis of women tap dancers in the early twentieth century. Future studies could reveal information on how gender influences contemporary tap performance through the examination of personal experiences in each participant's improvisations.

Further investigations into the oral transmission of tap dance could be applied to dance history and diaspora studies. Studying the tap challenge within the context of storytelling techniques would supplement investigations of the influence of European traditions in the United States dance history as seen in Hill's (2010: 13-14) analysis of the role Irish satire, poetry, and storytelling played in the evolution of tap dance. Inclusion of the stories that accompany tap steps as a means of preserving the history of the dance form would add another dimension to the study of oral traditions of the African Diaspora. Tap dance is mentioned by authors such as Gottschild (2003), De

Frantz (2002) and Malone (1996) but its role in the African Dance Diaspora is not explored in detail.

Upon the completion of my fieldwork, an aspect that would repay more detailed examination is how each participant's musical preferences impacted on their interactions at the tap jams. Further work is required to interpret cultural meanings as they are embodied by the performers. Opportunities to examine issues such as gender, race, class, age of tap artists and their influences outside of a theatrical context exist within subjects such as ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicologists investigate music as a social process and the studies of academics such as Norman Denzin (2010, 2013) provided excellent models for interpreting meanings in music created in social contexts. As a dance form that produces sound, tap dance would benefit from additional research that examines how performers value the music that inspires their rhythms and how it is chosen by each individual. Understanding the connections between musical selection and tap performance may reveal patterns within the communities that reflect cultural trends in English society.

Returning to the fieldsite of Facebook and the London Tap Jam website in January 2014, I discovered members in the London tap community exploring tap dance within a popular culture context. Participants formed a group called Pulse Collective and were sharing clips and encouraging members to vote for Sky 1's *Got to Dance 4* talent competition in the United Kingdom.¹ The Pulse Collective is a tap ensemble that explores rhythm tap dance and blends sounds of hip-hop, funk, and dance music. In examining the Pulse Collective's online clips I noticed immediately that the dancers

were not wearing a uniform costume. Each performer is dressed differently to mark them as individuals even though they are performing as part of an ensemble. The dancers all execute the same tap steps but with variations in their performance, such as facial expressions, carriage of the body, and position of the hands. The focus of the performance is on rhythmic interpretation of the music. The tap steps are used to demonstrate the performers' skill and virtuosity. The performers did not utilise acrobatic tricks, props, or theatrical effects to gain the attention of the judges and audience.

The lack of uniformity in the performers of the Pulse Collective's audition reflected patterns I found in the tap community members. The variations in performance differ depending on how each performer chose to interpret the rhythm. The tap dancers in the Pulse Collective were exploring the intersection of culture and practice: the improvised rhythm tap of America with their English tap syllabus training. Dance scholar Stacey Prickett discovered a similar result in her analysis of the Sonia Sabri company performance of improvised hip-hop and kathak solos in the production *Kathakbox*:

[b]eyond virtuosic display, the solo moments of hip-hop are classified as 'self-expressive improvisation' facilitating an engagement with self, leading to an 'intercultural body', disrupting binaries of 'black/white, self/other, and either/or'. (2012: 180)

The dancers were not engaging with conflicting and dual identities but generating a single identity embodying their personal cultural history.

The Pulse Collective's performance is an example of changing perceptions of the dance form. Tap dance in England is still seen as linked to its history and evolution in the

United States but there is a willingness to explore the dance form without paying tribute explicitly to past practitioners. The performers did not acknowledge any practitioners in their feedback session with the judges. As a professional tap dancer I observed some steps in the ensemble's audition that may have been inspired by American practitioners such as Savion Glover or Michelle Dorrance but I was unable to confirm which steps were taken from the tap dancers for each individual and why. I could clearly see individual influences by members in the ensemble taken from performances that I observed in the London tap community. Despite the use of set tap choreography, the performance of the Pulse Collective acted as vehicle for expressing individuality through tap performance.

The comments provided by the judges in the online clip also reflect the impact of exploring and developing an individual identity in tap performance. Kimberly Wyatt is an American pop singer, dancer and choreographer who trained in various dance styles, including tap dance. Wyatt (Sky 1's Got to Dance 4, 2013) describes the Pulse Collective's piece as breathing new life into a 'traditional' dance form. Aston Merrygold is a British pop singer with experience performing hip-hop routines with his former group JLS. Merrygold's comments address the performance elements of the ensemble such as style and confidence. The different focus for each judge reinforces the changing perception of tap dance in England. The American judge Wyatt immediately links tap dance to its historical origins with her use of the term 'traditional' but English judge Merrygold views tap dance as a performance without any historical connotations. My initial viewing left me frustrated at the judges' responses. The judges agreed that it was 'successful' as an audition selection but not a standalone piece of

rhythm tap performance; they experienced the piece as a form of amusement for a competition as a form of popular culture.

Watching the Pulse Collective clip brought the realisation that I had succeeded in exploring tap improvisation as a member of the English tap communities. My cultural experiences continue to influence my own perception of tap dance as I engage with the dance form in social contexts beyond performance. Viewing the clip as an American tap practitioner I had unconsciously looked for a link to past practitioners due to my own tap training. These reflections brought to mind my initial encounter of tap improvisation in England and the student's question, 'how do you improvise tap dance?' The late American tap dancer Jimmy Slyde (*Tap*, 1989) suggests that as tap dancers we need to veer 'off course' to discover 'uncharted lands'. His comment summarises the process of learning how to improvise tap dance. Improvising tap dance requires a willingness to respond spontaneously to rhythms, regardless of the context in which you hear the music: in performance, in the studio, or in a digital environment. Tap dancers communicate and interpret, they listen and respond. Above all they share their own discoveries of those uncharted lands.

Notes:

¹ See Clip 8: Pulse Collective audition clip (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFmk6Usf_WU, 2013)

Appendix A: DVD Examples

Clip 1	Example of ‘trading eights/trading fours’ between tap dancer and musician	0:05
Clip 2	Example of comping	1:52
Clip 3	Manchester case studies footage	2:52
Clip 4	London case studies footage	15:00
Clip 5	Example of improvised interaction between tap dancer and audience	19:30
Clip 6	Example of improvised interaction between tap dancer and musician	23:03
Clip 7	Example of improvised interaction between tap dancer and community member	25:04
Clip 8	Pulse Collective audition clip	27:00

Appendix B: Participant Interviews

- Crawford, S. (2009) Facebook Interview H. Aust, 06 December.
- Crawford, S. (2009) Interview with J. Murray, 03 November.
- Crawford, S. (2009) Interview with J. Laniyan, 04 May.
- Crawford, S. (2009) Interview with M. Lander, 02 June.
- Crawford, S. (2009) Interview with D. Sheridan, 02 June.
- Crawford, S. (2010) Skype interview with H. Cornell, 09 December.
- Crawford, S. (2010) Interview with D. Hartley, 10 May.
- Crawford, S. (2010) Interview with W. Gaines, 20 October.
- Crawford, S. (2010) Interview with M. Wohl, 05 May.
- Crawford, S. (2010) Email conversation with V. Annand, 01 October.
- Crawford, S. (2011) Interview with D. Scattergood, 30 June.
- Crawford, S. (2011) Interview with B. Mahoney, 08 August.
- Crawford, S. (2011) Interview with M. Drees, 01 July.
- Crawford, S. (2011) Small group interview, London, 26 February.
- Crawford, S. (2011) Group interview, Manchester, 22 October.

Appendix C: Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing Sources

ISTD (1936) *Syllabus of Tap Dancing for Amateurs*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1938) *Syllabus of Tap Dancing for Amateurs*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1940) *Syllabus of Tap Dancing for Amateurs*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1949) *Syllabus of Tap Dancing for Amateurs*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1954) *Modern Stage Dance Branch: Grade Examinations*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1967) *Modern Stage Dance Branch: Grade Examinations*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1981) *Tap Branch Tap Dance Syllabus*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1989) *Modern and Tap Dance Syllabus*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (1990) *Tap Technique*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (2005) *Tap Dance Faculty: Primary Test, Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

ISTD (2009) *Tap Dance Faculty: Primary Test, Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

Bibliography

Albright, A. C. (1997) *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Albright, A. C. and Gere, D. (ed.) (2003) *Taken By Surprise: a Dance Improvisation Reader*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Ames, J. and Siegleman, J. (1977) *The Book of Tap: Recovering America's Long Lost Dance*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Amit, V. (ed.) (2000) *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*. London: Routledge.

Anbinder, T. (2001) *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum*. New York: The Free Press.

Appadurai, A. (ed.) (2001) *Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bazeley, P. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*. London: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Berg, M.L. and Sigona, N. (2013) 'Ethnography, Diversity and Urban Space', *Identities*, 20 (4), pp. 347-360.

Berliner, P. F. (1994) *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Blumer, H. (1986) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd.

Brennan, M. A. (1999) Every Little Movement Has a Meaning All Its Own: Movement Analysis in Dance Research. In *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Browning, B. (2002) 'Global Dance and Globalization: Emerging Perspectives', *Dance Research Journal*, 34(2), pp. 12-13.

Browning, B. (2004) 'Choreographing Postcoloniality: Reflections on the Passing of Edward Said', *Dance Research Journal*, 35(2), pp. 164-169.

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Buckland, T. J. (ed.) (1983) *Traditional Dance: Historical Perspectives*. Crewe: Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education.
- Buckland, T. J. (1999) 'All Dances Are Ethnic, but Some Are More Ethnic than Others', *Dance Research Journal*, 17(1), pp. 3-21.
- Buckland, T. J. (ed.) (1999) *Dance in the Field: Theories, Methods, and Issues in Dance Ethnography*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Buckland, T. J. (2001) 'Dance, Authenticity, and Cultural Memory: the Politics of Embodiment', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, pp. 1-16.
- Buckland, T. J. (ed.) (2006) *Dancing from Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Buckland, T. J. (2007) 'Crompton's Campaign: The Professionalisation of Dance Pedagogy in Late Victorian England', *Dance Research*, 25(1), pp. 1-34.
- Buckland, T. J. (2011) *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bufalino, B. (2004) *Tapping the Source: Tap Dance Stories, Theory, and Practice*. New York: Codhill Press.
- Burt, R. (1998) *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, Race, and Nation in Early Modern Dance*. London: Routledge.
- Burt, R. (2007) *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities*. London: Routledge.
- Carroll, S. (2008) 'The Practical Politics of Step-Stealing and Textual Poaching: YouTube, Audio-Visual Media and Contemporary Swing Dancers Online', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(2), pp. 183-204
- Carter, A. (ed.) (1998) *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Carter, C. L. (2000) 'Improvisation in Dance', *The Journal for the Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 58(2), pp. 181-190.
- Chakravorty, P. (2006) 'Dancing into Modernity: Multiple Narratives of India's Kathak Dance', *Dance Research Journal*, 38(1), pp. 115-136.
- Christie, J. (2002) 'Paddle and Roll (as described by Tobias Tak)', *Dance Teacher*, (October), pp. 443.
- Coffey, A. (1999) *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. London: Sage.

- Cohen-Stratyner, B. (2001) 'Social Dance: Contexts and Definitions', *Dance Research Journal*, 33(2), pp.121-124
- Collins, P. and Gallinat, A. (eds) (2010) *The Ethnographic Self as Resource: Writing Memory and Experience into Ethnography*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Cooper Albright, A. and Dils, A. (eds) (2001) *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Currie, J. (2009) 'Music After All', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 62(1), pp. 145-203.
- Cypess, R. (2010) 'The Community as Ethnographer: Views of Classical Music in the English-Speaking Orthodox Jewish Community', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 41(1), pp. 117-139.
- Daniel, Y. (1995) *Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Daniel, Y. (2005) *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Davida, D. (ed.) (2012) *Fields in Motion: Ethnography in the Worlds of Dance*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Dankworth, L. and David, A. (2014) *Dance Ethnography and Global Perspectives: Identity, Embodiment and Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- DeFrantz, T. F. (ed.) (2002) *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2004) *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Delamont, S. and Stephens, N. (2008) 'Up on the Roof: The Embodied Habitus of Diasporic Capoeira', *Cultural Sociology*, 2(1), pp. 57-74.
- Deleuze, G. (1994) *Difference and Repetition*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Demers, J. (2006) 'Dancing Machines: 'Dance Dance Revolution', Cybernetic Dance, and Musical Taste', *Popular Music*, 25(3), pp. 401-414.
- Dempsey, N. (2008) 'Hook-Ups and Train Wrecks: Contextual Parameters and the Coordination of Jazz Interactions', *Symbolic Interaction*, 31(1), pp. 1-34.
- DeNora, T. (2000) *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Denzin, N. K. and van den Scott, J. (eds.) (2014) *Revisiting Symbolic Interaction in Music Studies and New Interpretive Works*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Denzin, N. K., Schneider, C. J., Gardner, R. O., Merrill, J. B., and Han, D. (eds.) (2010) *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Desmond, J. C. (ed.) (1997) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- DeWalt, K. and DeWalt B. (2011) *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Dodds, S. and Cook, S. C. (eds) (2013) *Bodies of Sound: Studies Across Popular Music and Dance*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Drysdale, B. (2000) 'The Language of Tap', *Dancing Times*, London (February), pp. 421-247.
- Eddleston, P. (2002) *Zelia Raye and the Development of Modern Theatre Dance*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.
- el-Ojeili, C. and H. P. (2006) *Critical Theories of Globalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Espinosa, L. (1928) 'Step Dancing', *The Dancing Times*, London (June), pp. 256-258.
- Espinosa, L. (1928) 'Step Dancing', *The Dancing Times*, London (July), pp. 382-383.
- Espinosa, L. (1928) 'Step Dancing', *The Dancing Times*, London (May), pp. 138-139.
- Falzon, M. A. (ed.) (2009) *Multi-sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis, and Locality in Contemporary Research*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Farnell, B. (2012) *Dynamic Embodiment: 'I Move Therefore I am'*. London: Routledge.
- Feld, S. and Keil, C. (2005) *Music Grooves*. Tucson: Fenestra Books.
- Feldman, A. (1996) *Inside Tap: Technique and Improvisation for Today's Tap Dancer*. Heightstown: Princeton Book Company, Publishers.
- Felfoldi, L. and Buckland, T. J. (eds) (2002) *Authenticity*. Budapest: European Folklore Institute.
- Finnegan, R. (2007) *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

- Fischlin, D., and Heble, A. (eds) (2004) *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Fogarty, M. (2012) 'Breaking Expectations: Imagined Affinities in Mediated Youth Cultures', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 26 (3), pp. 449-462
- Foley, C. (2001) 'Perceptions of Irish Step Dance; National, Global, Local', *Dance Research Journal*, 33(1), pp. 34-45.
- Foley, C. (2010) 'Negotiating Boundaries in Irish Step-dance Performance Practice: Colin Dunne and Piano One', *Inbhear, Journal of Irish Music and Dance*, 1(1), pp. 56-62.
- Foley, C. (2011) 'The Irish Céilí: A Site for Constructing, Experiencing, and Negotiating a Sense of Community and Identity', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 29(2), pp. 43-60.
- Foley, C. E., Burt, R., Mulrooney, D., O' Brien, V., Roche, J., Ni Bhriain, O., Yeoh, F. (2007) 'At the Crossroads? Dance and Irish Culture' *Dance Research Forum*, Ireland.
- Foulkes, J. L. (2002) *Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Fraleigh, S. H. and Hanstein, P. (eds) (1999) *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Frank, R. E. (1990) *Tap! The Greatest Tap Dancing Stars and their Stories*. New York: Da Capo Press.
- Garcia, A., Standlee, A., Bechhoff, J., and Cui, Y. (2009) 'Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 38 (1), pp. 52-84.
- Gardner, H. (1982) *Art, Mind, and Brain: a Cognitive Approach to Creativity*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Gibson, W. (2010) 'The Group Ethic in the Improvising Jazz Ensemble: A Symbolic Interactionist Analysis of Music, Identity, and Social Context', *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 35, pp. 11-28
- Gilchrist, A. (2004) *The Well-Connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development*. Bristol: The Policy Press, University of Bristol.
- Giurchescu, A. (2001) 'The Power of Dance and Its Social and Political Uses', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, pp. 109-121.

- Glover, S. and Weber, B. (2000) *Savion: My Life in Tap*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Goldbetter, S. (1992) *On Tap: Tap as a Living History*. United States: Circuit Theatre, Inc.
- Gore, G. (1986) 'Dance in Nigeria: The Case for a National Company', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 4(2), pp. 54-64.
- Goldman, D. (2004) 'Steve Paxton and Trisha Brown: Falling in the Dynamite of the Tenth of a Second', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 22(1), pp. 45-56.
- Gottschild, B. D. (2003) *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gottschild, B. D. (1996) *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Goulding, C. (2005) 'Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Phenomenology: A Comparative Analysis of Three Qualitative Strategies for Marketing Research', *European Journal of Marketing*, 39 (3), pp. 294 – 308.
- Grau, A. (1994) 'Feminist Ethnography and Performance: A Review Essay', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 12(1), pp. 12-19.
- Grau, A. (1992) 'Intercultural Research in the Performing Arts', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 10(2), pp. 3-29.
- Graves, N. G. (2000) *The Royalty of Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters and the Negotiation of Race, Gender and Class in African American Theater 1900-1940*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gray, A. (1998) *The Souls of Your Feet: a Tap Dance Guidebook for Rhythm Explorers*. Austin: Grand Weaver's Publishing.
- Hagendoorn, I. (2003) 'Cognitive Dance Improvisation: How Study of the Motor System Can Inspire Dance (And Vice Versa)', *Leonardo*, 36(3), pp. 221-227.
- Hahn, T. (2007) *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Hamera, J. (2007) *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hammersley, M., and Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

- Hanna, J. L. (1979) *To Dance is Human: a Theory of Nonverbal Communication*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Harker, B. (2008) 'Louis Armstrong, Eccentric Dance, and the Evolution of Jazz on the Eve of Swing', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 61(1), pp. 67-121.
- Harkin, J. (2009) 'Is access to the internet now a human right?' *The Times*, London, Times Newspapers Limited, pp. 4-5.
- Harold, R. (2008) 'Happy Birthday Will Gaines', *Dance Expression*, (June), pp. 8.
- Hartley, D. (2007) *Teach Yourself Tap Dancing*. London: Hodder Education.
- Hartley, D. (2000) 'Talking Tap with Derek Hartley', *Dance Expression*, (March), pp. 35.
- Hartley, D. (2000) 'Talking Tap with Derek Hartley', *Dance Expression*, (February), pp. 38.
- Hartley, D. (2000) 'Talking Tap with Derek Hartley', *Dance Expression*, (January), pp. 34.
- Hartley, D. (2001) 'Talking Tap with Derek Hartley', *Dance Expression*, (March), pp. 32.
- Haskins, J. and Mitgang, N. R. (1988) *Mr. Bojangles: the Biography of Bill Robinson*. London: Robson Books.
- Haygood, W. (2003) *In Black and White: The Life of Sammy Davis, Jr.* New York: Billboard Books.
- Hendrikson, C. (1984) 'The Evolution of Irish Step Dance: from Early Irish History to Modern American Tap Dance', *Viltis*, 42(6), pp. 10-11.
- Hill, C. V. (2000) *Brotherhood in Rhythm: The Jazz Tap Dancing of the Nicholas Brothers*. New York: Cooper Square Press.
- Hill, C. V. (2010) *Tap Dancing America: a Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hine, C. (2000) *Virtual Ethnography*. London: SAGE
- Hine, C. (2007) 'Multi-sited Ethnography as a Middle Range Methodology for Contemporary STS', *Science Technology Human Values*, 32 (6), pp. 652-671.
- Hurley, A. W. (2009) *The Return of Jazz: Joachim-Ernst Berendt and the West German Cultural Change*. New York: Berghahn Books.

- The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (eds) (2004) *100 Years of Dancing*. London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.
- Jackson, J. D. (2001) 'Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing', *Dance Research Journal*, 33(2), pp. 40-53.
- Johnson, A. E. (1999) *Jazz Tap: from African Drums to American Feet*. United States: Rosen Publishing Group.
- Jordan, S. (2000) *Moving Music: Dialogues with Music in the Twentieth-Century Ballet*. London: Dance Books.
- Kaeppler, A. L. (2000) 'Dance Ethnology and the Anthropology of Dance', *Dance Research Journal*, 32(1), pp. 116-125.
- Kaeppler, A. L. (2001) 'Dance and the Concept of Style', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, pp. 49-63.
- Kaeppler, A. L. and Dunin, E. I. (eds) (2007) *Dance Structures. Perspectives on the Analysis of Human Movement*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1995) 'Theorizing Heritage', *Ethnomusicology*, 39(3), pp. 367-380.
- Knott L. (2001) '"World Wide Simultaneous Dance": Dancing the Connection between "Cyberplace" and the Global Landscape', *Leonardo*, 34(1), pp. 11-16.
- Knowles, M. (1998) *The Tap Dance Dictionary*. Jefferson: MacFarland & Company.
- Knowles, M. (2002) *Tap Roots: The Early History of Tap Dancing*. Jefferson: MacFarland.
- Kolb, A. and Kalogeropoulou, S. (2012) 'In Defence of Ballet: Women, Agency and the Philosophy of Pleasure', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 31(1), pp. 107-125.
- Kozinets, R. (2010) *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London: Sage
- Kraut, A. (2003) 'Between Primitivism and Diaspora: The Dance Performances of Josephine Baker, Zora Neale Hurston, and Katherine Dunham', *Theatre Journal*, 55(3), pp. 433-450.
- Krishnaswamy, R. (2002) 'The Criticism of Culture and the Culture of Criticism: At the Intersection of Postcolonialism and Globalization Theory', *Diacritics*, 32(2), pp. 106-126.
- Kroier, J. (2012) 'Music, Global History, and Postcoloniality', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 43(1), pp. 139-186.

- Langnes, T. F., and Fasting, K. (2014) 'Identity Constructions Among Breakdancers', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, March (1), pp. 1-16.
- La Rocco, C. (2007) 'International Dancers Mix their Traditions into American Tap', *The New York Times*, New York: The New York Times.
- Mahoney, B. (2001) 'Labanotation: "Short hand" for Clarification in the Tap Dance Class', *International Council of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation*, Columbus, Ohio.
- Malone, J. (1988) "'Let the Punishment Fit the Crime": The Vocal Choreography of Cholly Atkins', *Dance Research Journal*, 20(1), pp. 11-18.
- Malone, J. (1996) *Steppin on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*. Chicago: The University of Illinois Press.
- Malnig, J. (ed.) (2009) *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Marcus, G. F. (1995) 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, pp. 95-117.
- Martin, G. (1968) 'Performing Styles in the Dances of the Carpathian Basin', *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 20, pp. 59-64.
- Martin, R. (1992) 'Dance Ethnography and the Limits of Representation', *Social Text*, 33, pp. 103-123.
- McAllister, M. (2011) *Whiting Up: Whiteface Minstrels and Stage Europeans in African American Performance*. Durham: The University of North Carolina Press.
- McDonald, C. (2008) 'Strictly come (tap) dancing' *The Times*, London: The Times, 12-13.
- Mead, G. H. (1934) *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Meduri, A. (2004) 'Bharatanatyam as a Global Dance: Some Issues in Teaching, Practice and Research', *Dance Research Journal*, 36 (2), pp. 11-29.
- Meduri, A. (2008) 'The Transfiguration of Indian/Asian Dance in the United Kingdom: Contemporary "Bharatanatyam" in Global Contexts', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 25(2), pp. 298-328.
- Meduri, A. (2008) 'Labels, Histories, Politics: Indian/South Asian Dance on the Global Stage', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 26(2), pp. 223-243.

- Middleton, R. (2006) *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music*. New York: Routledge.
- Miller, D. and Slater, D. (2000) *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*. Oxford: Oxford International Publishers.
- Milligan, L. A. (1950) 'Terpsichorean Tap', *The Dancing Times*, (February), pp. 296-298.
- Monaghan, T. (1998) 'The Resurgence of Rhythm Tap in New York', *The Dancing Times*, (August), pp. 100.
- Monaghan, T. (2002) 'Narratives of Rhythm Tap', *The Dancing Times*, (May), pp. 21-25.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (ed) (2004) *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Morrione, T. J (2013) 'Globalization, Industrialization, and Social Change: Conceptualizing Macro Process in Micro Terms Using Herber Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism', *Global Awareness Society International 22nd Annual Conference*, (May), Rome, Italy, pp. 1-17.
- Nahachewsky, A. (1995) 'Participatory and Presentational Dance as Ethnochoreological Categories', *Dance Research Journal*, 27(1), pp. 1-15.
- Nahachewsky, A. (2001) 'Once Again: On the Concept of "Second Existence Folk Dance"', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, pp. 17-28.
- Neal, M. A. (1998) *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Public Culture*. New York, Routledge.
- Nercessian, A. H. (2002) *Postmodernism and Globalization in Ethnomusicology: An Epistemological Problem*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press.
- Ness, S. A. (1992) *Body, Movement, and Culture: Kinesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Nettl, B. (1983) *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Nettl, B. (2006) *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*. 2nd edn. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Nicholson, S. (2005) *Is Jazz Dead? (Or has it Moved to a New Address)*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group, LLC.

- Novack, C. J. (1990) *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York, Routledge.
- Ormonde, J. (1931) *Tap Dancing at a Glance*. Massachusetts: Applewood Books.
- Osumare, H. (2002) 'Global Breakdancing and the Intercultural Body', *Dance Research Journal*, 34(2), pp. 30-45.
- Osumare, H. (2007) *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-hop: Power Moves*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pakes, A. (2006) 'Dance's Mind-Body Problem', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 24(2), pp. 87-104.
- Pascale, C. (2011) *Cartographies of Knowledge: Exploring Qualitative Epistemologies*. London: Sage
- Penny, P. (1999) 'Dancing at the Interface of the Social and the Theatrical: Focus on the Participatory Patterns of Contemporary Competition Ballroom Dancers in Britain', *Dance Research*, 17(1), pp. 47-74.
- Perpener III, J. (2000) 'Dance, Difference, and Racial Dualism at the Turn of the Century', *Dance Research Journal*, 32(1), pp. 63-69.
- Pierre (1931) 'Tap Dancing', *The Amateur Dancer*, (July), pp. 21-23.
- Pinheiro, R. (2011) 'The Creative Process in the Context of Jazz Jam Sessions', *Journal of Music and Dance*, 1(1), pp. 1-5,
- Popat, S. and Smith-Autard, J. (2002) 'Dance-Making on the Internet: Can On-Line Choreographic Projects Foster Creativity in the User-Participant?' *Leonardo*, 35(1), pp. 31-36.
- Prickett, S. (2012) 'Tradition and Innovation in Cross-Cultural Creativity: Defying Britain's Tick-Box Culture: Kathak in Dialogue with Hip-Hop', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 30(2), pp. 169-185.
- Prickett, S. (2004) 'Techniques and Institutions: The Transformation of British Dance Tradition through South Asian Dance', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 22(1), pp. 1-21.
- Quigley, C. (1991) 'Step Dancing in Newfoundland: A North American Regional Style', *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 33(1), pp. 231-241.

- Quigley, C. (1993) 'Catching Rhymes: Generative Musical Processes in the Compositions of a French Newfoundland Fiddler', *Ethnomusicology*, 37(2), pp. 155-200.
- Quigley, C. (2001) 'Reflections on Hearing to "Designate the Square Dance as the American Folk Dance of the United States": Cultural Politics and an American Vernacular Dance Form', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, pp. 145-157.
- Raffe, W. G. (1930) 'Tap Dancing', *The Dancing Times*, (November), pp. 241.
- Raye, Z. (1927) 'Limbering and Stretching', *The Dancing Times*, (November).
- Raye, Z. (1928) 'Modern Spectacular Dancing: Some Random Notes, Including a Hint About the Splits', *The Dancing Times*, (December), pp. 296-297.
- Raye, Z. (1936) *American Tap Dancing*. London: Noverre Press.
- Rhodes, R. (1939) 'Paul Draper: The Unique Dancer', *The Dancing Times*, (April), pp. 26-27.
- Roan, C. (1993) *Clues to American Dance*. Washington, D.C.: Starrhill Press, Inc.
- Robinson, D. (2010) 'The Ugly Duckling: The Refinement of Ragtime Dancing and the Mass Production and Marketing of Modern Social Dance', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 28(1), 179-199.
- Rye, H. and Green, J. (1995) 'Black Musical Internationalism in England in the 1920s', *Black Music Research Journal*, 15(1) pp. 93-107.
- Sade-Beck, L. (2004) 'Internet Ethnography: Online and Offline', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(2), pp. 45-51.
- Sanger, A. (1989) 'Music and Musicians, Dance and Dancers: Socio-Musical Interrelationships in Balinese Performance', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 21, pp. 57-69.
- Scalan, J. (2008) 'Will Gaines Birthday Celebrations', *Dance Expression*, (June), pp. 10.
- Seeger, A. (1996) 'Ethnomusicologists, Archives, Professional Organizations, and the Shifting Ethics of Intellectual Property', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 28, pp. 87-105.
- Seeger, M., and Pershing, R. (1992) *Talking Feet: Southern Solo Dance, Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap*. California: North Atlantic Books.
- Shapiro, S. B. (ed.) (2008) *Dance in a World of Change: Reflections on Globalization and Cultural Difference*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Silverman, D. (2004) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*. London: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Simonari, R. (2008) 'Bringing "Carmen" Back to Spain: Antonio Gades's Flamenco Dance in Carlos Saura's Choreofilm', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 26(2), pp. 189-203.

Skinner, J. (ed.) (2013) *The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach*. London, Bloomsbury.

Sklar, D. (1991) 'On Dance Ethnography', *Dance Research Journal*, 23(1), pp. 6-10.

Sklar, D. (2000) 'Reprise: On Dance Ethnography', *Dance Research Journal*, 32(1), pp. 70-77.

Slobin, M. (1993) *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Sloboda, J. (2005) *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spalding, S. E. and Woodside J. H. (1995) *Communities in Motion: Dance, Community, and Tradition in America's Southeast and Beyond*. Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc.

Sporton, G. (2004) 'Dance as Cultural Understanding: Ideas, Policy, and Practice', *Dance Research Journal*, 36(2), pp. 80-90.

Stearns, M. and Stearns, J. (1968) *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*. New York: Da Capo.

Steingress, G. (ed.) *Songs of the Minotaur - Hybridity and Popular Music in the Era of Globalization*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Stobart, H. (ed.) (2008) *The New (Ethno)musicologies*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Stratyner, B. (1996) *Ned Wayburn and the Dance Routine: From Vaudeville to the Ziegfeld Follies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Teck, K. (1989) *Music for the Dance: Reflections on a Collaborative Art*. Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc.

Thomas, A. E. (2001) 'Practicing Tradition: History and Community in an Appalachian Dance Style', *Western Folklore*, 60(2/3), Communities of Practice: Traditional Music and Dance, pp. 163-181.

- Thomas, H. (2004) 'Physical Culture, Bodily Practices and Dance in Late Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century America', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 22(2), pp. 185-204
- Thomas, H. (2003) *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thomas, H. (1995) *Dance, Modernity, and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance*. London: Routledge.
- Thomas, H. (ed.) (1997) *Dance in the City*. London: MacMillan Press, Ltd.
- Thomas, H., and Ahmed J. (2004) *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*. London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Thomas, H. and Cooper, L. (2002) 'Dancing into the Third Age: Social Dance as Cultural Text. Research in Progress', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 20(1), pp. 54-80.
- Toll, R. (1974) *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vermersch, P. (1994) *L'entretien d'explicitation*, Paris, ESF.
- Wainwright, S. P., Williams, C., and Turner, B. S. (2006) 'Varieties of Habitus and the Embodiment of Ballet', *Qualitative Research*, 6(4), pp. 535-558.
- Walker, A. (2008) 'Legacy of a Hooper', *Dance Expression*, (October), pp. 16.
- Walker, D. (2010) 'The Location of Digital Ethnography', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*, 2 (3), pp. 23-34.
- Wang, G. and Yueh-yu Yeh, E. (2005) 'Globalization and Hybridization in Cultural Production: A Tale of Two Films', LEWI Working Paper Series, Paper 36, April 2005, pp. 1-25.
- Widdess, R. (2006) 'Musical Structure, Performance and Meaning: The Case of a Stick-Dance from Nepal', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 15(2), pp. 179-213.
- Williams, D. (2004) *Anthropology and the Dance: Ten Lectures*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Marston Book Services Limited.
- Wittel, A. (2000) 'Ethnography on the Move: From Field to Net to Internet', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(1).
- Wolcott, H. F. (2008) *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*. 2nd edn. New York: Alta Mira Press.

Wulff, H. (2007) *Dancing at the Crossroads: Memory and Mobility in Ireland*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Filmography

About Tap (1980) Directed by G.T. Nierenberg [Film]. United States: GTN Productions: 27 minutes.

Eddie Brown's Scientific Rhythm (1990) Directed by S. Arslanian [Film]. United States: IMAGES, Professional Video and Computer Graphic Production: 30 minutes.

Leonard Reed's Shim Sham Shimmy (2005) Directed by R. Scheerer [Film]. United States: On Tap! Tapping with the Masters of America, Rusty E. Frank: 45 minutes.

No Maps on My Taps: the Art of Jazz Tap Dancing (1980) Directed by G. T. Nierenberg [Film]. United States: GTN Productions: 58 minutes.

Tap (1989) Directed by N. Castle [Film]. United States: Tristar Pictures: 111 minutes.

Tap Dancing Thesis (2013) Directed by J. Cham and M. Rosenberg [Film]. United States: PhD Comics: 10 minutes.

The Universal Mind of Bill Evans Jazz Pianist: On the Creative Process and Self-teaching (2004) Directed by L. Carvell [Film]. United States: Rhapsody Films. B. Ricker., EFOR Films: 60 minutes.

Websites Accessed

Cahoona (2010) *History* Available at: www.bandonthewall.org/archive/history/ (Accessed 02 February 2010).

Laniyan, J. (2010) *The Hoofers Lounge Facebook Group* Available at: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=113045325967&ref=ts> (Accessed 05 June 2010).

Murray, J. (2009) *Black History Month events from Tap Rhythm Project* Available at: <http://www.tapproject.com/2009/10/black-history-month-events-from-tap-rhythm-project/> (Accessed 10 July 2014).

Sheridan, D. (2010) *The London Tap Jam* Available at <http://www.londontapjam.org/> (Accessed, 08 October 2010).

- Walker, A. and Murray J. (2007) *Tap Rhythm Project* Available at: www.tapproject.com (Accessed 12 May 2009).
- Walker, A. (2014) *Annette Walker* Available at: <http://www.annetnewalker.co.uk/> (Accessed on 01 August 2014).
- The American Tap Dance Foundation* (2014) Available at: <http://atdf.org/TTCPIndex.html> (Accessed 01 August 2014).
- Band on the Wall* (2014) Available at <http://contactmcr.com/whats-on/3419-sound-moves-mixed-movement-jam/> (Accessed 08 February 2014).
- The Business Dictionary* (2013) Available at: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/Skype.html> (Accessed 20 November 2013).
- Facebook* (2005-2010) Available at: www.techterms.com/definition/facebook (Accessed 28 January 2010).
- Facebook/ThePulseCollective* (2013) Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePulseCollective> (Accessed 10 February 2014)
- Hoofers Lounge Facebook Group Page*, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/113045325967/> (Accessed 30 November 2009).
- The Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing* (2011) Available at: <http://www.istd.org/tap-dance/about/> (Accessed 10 September 2011)
- The International Dance Teachers Association* (2009) Available at: <http://www.idta.co.uk/Site2/History.html> (Accessed 10 September 2011)
- The London Tap Jam/Facebook* (2010) Available at: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/groups/2647756067/?fref=ts> (Accessed 08 October 2010).
- Music Works Unlimited* (2013) Available at: <http://www.musicworksunlimited.com/about> (Accessed 04 August 2014)
- The Office for National Statistics* (2014) Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/mro/news-release/census-result-shows-increase-in-population-of-london-as-it-tops-8-million/censuslondonnr0712.html> (Accessed 28 February 2014).
- Ronnie Scott's - Club History* (2009) Available at: www.ronniescotts.co.uk/about (Accessed 04 February 2009).
- Tap Attack* (2010) Available at: <http://www.tapattack.co.uk/> (Accessed 01 August 2014)

The Tap Legacy Foundation, Inc. (2013) Available at:
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/taplegacy?fref=ts> (Accessed 13 February 2013).

The 2011 Census figure for Greater Manchester (2012) Available at:
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/business-transparency/freedom-of-information/what-can-i-request/previous-foi-requests/population/greater-manchester-population-and-religion/index.html> (Accessed 28 February 2014).

